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THE
CONNEXION
OF
CHRISTIANITY
WITH
HUMAN HAPPINESS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BOYLE LECTURES
FOR THE YEAR 1821.

BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXIII.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland-court.

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THE
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MANKIND have constantly fluctuated, in their religious sentiments, between the opposite extremes of bigotry or indifference, of superstition or infidelity. They have either imagined the visitations of the Deity “in the earthquake and the fire in which he was not,” or refused to confess his presence “in the still small voice in which he was:” They have either listened, with credulous devotion, to the pretensions of the fanatic and the impostor,

trembled with the secret apprehension of witchcraft and of spectres, and yielded their implicit faith to the suggestions of dreams and auguries ; or they have presumptuously separated themselves from all connexion with the spiritual world, denied the truth of revelation, disputed even the existence of a God, and refused submission to any other authority, than that of the reason and the will.

Such are the extremes, into which the weakness of our nature is betrayed, by ignorance on the one hand, and civilization on the other. At the present day, we are effectually delivered from the errors of superstition ; but there is a very considerable danger of our falling into the opposite evil of religious incredulity. “ The human reason,” says Luther, in his strong, bold manner, “ is like an intoxicated peasant ; if you support him on one

side, he falls on the other." From believing too much, we have come to believe too little. From falsely imagining the revelations of divinity, in objects that are purely natural, we have begun to suppose, that there is nothing but what is natural in revelation itself. We have only escaped from the central darkness of our ignorance, to become confused and blinded with the excess of light.—By the fair exertion of the understanding, that intellectual night has been dispersed, which, in our father's days, seemed peopled by a host of visionary existences. Those mists have been scattered from the mind, through which every object had appeared magnified to view beyond its true and natural dimensions. In their ignorance of secondary causes, our ancestors referred every accident, which exceeded the bounds of their experience, to the immediate in-

terference of the Deity. The creation had not yet been examined in its detail. They saw nothing in the universe, but its larger outlines and more striking features ; and, as “ the eye glanced from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,” it fell upon no intermediate objects, that interposed between Man and his Creator. With us, on the contrary, a more minute acquaintance with the laws of nature seems to have withdrawn our attention from the eternal Being, by whom they were ordained. We have lost sight of the Almighty in the investigation of his works. The soul, wholly bent upon the realities of the material world, seems to have contracted its sphere of vision, and to have become incapable of aspiring to the lofty truths of the gospel ; to have hardened its moral touch, and to have rendered itself insensible to the spiritualities of religion.

We demand for every opinion a conviction that may be apprehended by the senses, and will not admit the possibility of any thing in heaven, or in earth, unless it can be mathematically proved, and experimentally demonstrated to the satisfaction of our frigid philosophy. The age in which Faith superseded Reason has been succeeded by an age, in which Reason has usurped an unjust ascendancy over Faith; in which the public mind has learned presumption in the consciousness of improvement; in which thousands among us have become conceited of their intellectual faculties and acquirements; in which, pretending to derive from the erroneous portion of their fathers' faith, an argument against all that it contains of inspiration and of truth, they have presumptuously turned aside from the gospel of the Redeemer, as if its divine

instructions were unworthy to receive the incense of their enlightened veneration.

This spirit of intellectual pride has, for some time, been gaining ground upon society. It is by no means exclusively confined to those who have openly separated themselves from the ranks of Christianity. The professed disciples of the Gospel, whom, of all men, it ought least to have affected, though removed from the more deadly centre of contagion, have shewn themselves to be infected with the intellectual malady. We find some, outwardly confessing the divine infallibility of scripture, yet refusing to submit the mind to its communications, and debasing its lofty revelations, to adapt them to the narrow measure of their limited capacities. We find others who appear to be altogether Christians when kneeling at the altar of their Redeemer, yet almost

persuaded to apostatize from the creed of their fathers, when they dwell upon the thrice-refuted pages of the infidel: or when, in the too light and familiar converse of society, they sanction his unhallowed insinuations by an ignominious silence. We find others vacillating under the direction of circumstances, now clinging to their creed as a virtuous prepossession of their childhood, and now looking with respect on unbelief, as a kind of splendid emancipation from the prejudices of ordinary men; at one time endeavouring to console their disappointment, or their sorrow, with feeble hopes of the truth of their religion; and at another, smoothing the way to crime, and cheering the timidity of the conscience, by recalling the arguments that would defeat them. While a very considerable portion of the nominal disciples of the

Saviour hold their cold belief, without any real appreciation of the benefits for which they are indebted to Christianity, and scarcely doubt but that the human reason—weak, erring, prejudiced, deteriorated human reason—is sufficient for all the moral and spiritual necessities of man, and effectual of itself, to establish the fairest principles of conduct, and enforce the practice of them by adequate obligations. They can perceive the wisdom of the moral code communicated by the Messiah's revelation ; they can estimate the value of those important articles of religious faith, which are assured to them by the gospel ; and because, when the truth is discovered to their view, and brought level to their apprehensions, they can enlarge upon its beauty, and investigate its motives, and illustrate its effects, they overlook the immeasurable distance

which exists between the faculties that are necessary to comprehend what is excellent, and the higher order of intelligence demanded for its invention ; and arrogantly conceive, that the instruction which appears to them so simple, might have been disclosed with equal ability and clearness, by the unaided faculties of the understanding. While in every moment of their lives, in the familiar intercourse of friends, in the negotiations of the active, in the tranquillity of home, in the competitions of society, they find every passion softened, every rivalry moderated, every bond confirmed, every virtuous affection sanctioned and enhanced, by the persuasions of that religious faith, which, like the sunshine and the showers of the God from whom it emanated, sheds its salutary influence on the evil and on the good ; with an inor-

dinate ingratitude they have begun to undervalue its instructions, and to entertain an unworthy estimation of its advantages:—while all is fair, and radiant, and fertile round them, they have learnt to turn away their eyes from the glories of the sun, and doubt their obligation to its beams.

It is against this religious indifference that the following reflections are directed. It is not my object to engage with open infidelity, by again detailing the conclusive evidences by which the gospel is supported. This has been already done so often, and so well, that no honest heart, or unprejudiced understanding, can enter on the inquiry, without being convinced of the supernatural origin of our belief. My aim is of another nature. It will be my endeavour, by a just and candid statement of the necessity of the

Christian revelation to the happiness of man, to awaken the devotion, and arouse the gratitude, of those, who look coldly upon the faith, as upon a thing of inconsiderable worth. I wish to inspire my readers with a fair appreciation of those lessons of eternal truth, which have been communicated by the revelation of the Messiah. In this attempt I shall direct their reflections to the following propositions:—

1st. That christian opinions are essential to human happiness.

2d. That those opinions could not have been established by the unaided powers of the reason.

3d. That, in the absence of those opinions, the reason could suggest no substitutes which could supply their loss.

The first of these heads I shall treat of at considerable length, the other two I

shall dismiss more briefly. In the prosecution of my task, it is my intention to support myself, as far as possible, by the authority, the admissions, and the examples of those, who have been most celebrated among the ranks of unbelief. If I should succeed in establishing the propositions that I have advanced, the conclusion is immediate. Unless all the better feelings of the heart have become extinct, under the overwhelming growth of the worldly passions, it is impossible not to be convinced of the wickedness of that indifferent and ungrateful feeling, with which the revelation of the Messiah is so extensively regarded. And while we learn to love the faith, by contemplating its holy ministrations of joy and peace, we may also derive from the consideration another, and an emphatic, testimony to its divine authority and truth.

If christianity has conferred a happiness on man, which he had not the means of creating for himself, it is the strongest internal proof of its super-human origin. “It is the good tree that bringeth forth the good fruit*.” This is one of those indisputable axioms to which infidelity itself has granted its assent. “If in the profound night by which my reason is surrounded,” says Maupertuis, “I find a system, which is the only one that can gratify the natural desire after happiness, can I fail to acknowledge it as true? Must I not confess that that which conduces to happiness is that which cannot possibly deceive †?”

* St. Matthew, 7th ch. 17th verse.

† Dans cette nuit profonde si je rencontre le système qui est le seul qui puisse remplir le desir que j’ai d’être heureux, ne dois je pas croire que celui qui me conduit au bonheur, est celui qui ne saurait me tromper.”—MAUPERTUIS *Essai de Philosophie Morale*.

PART I.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO HUMAN HAPPINESS.

The consideration of this proposition I shall divide into two Chapters, which will again be subdivided into Sections.—The first Chapter will be designed to shew, that Christian opinions are essential to the happiness of society. The second, that Christian opinions are essential to the happiness of individuals.



CHAPTER I.

Sect. I.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE
HAPPINESS OF SOCIETY FROM THEIR INFLU-
ENCE ON THE PUBLIC MIND.

MAN cannot live alone. He is connected with his fellow-creatures, by the long imbecility of childhood, by the gradually increasing infirmities of age, by the bonds of instinctive affection, and by the necessity of combining with his fellow men, for the purposes of opposing their common enemies, and of supplying their common wants. If separate, the race perishes *.

* Mundi

Principio indulsit communis conditor illis

Tantum animas, nobis animum quoque, mutuus ut nos

Affectus petere auxilium et præstare juberet,

There is also another law resulting from the inevitable conditions of human existence. When associated into bodies, there naturally arises from the superiority of the parent to the child, and from the irregular distribution of bodily strength and intellectual endowment, an inequality among the individuals. Man cannot live alone; neither, when united in society, can all men be equal.

This last ordinance, to which human nature is subjected, has been considered as peculiarly irksome, and a thousand theorists, whose minds have been misled by the meteor light of a false imagination, or exaggerated sentiment, have meditated its abolition. But, however fair

Dispersos trahere in populum, migrare vetusto
De nemore, et proavis habitatas linquere sylvas;
Ædificare domos, Laribus conjungere nostris
Tectum aliud, tutos vicino limine somnos,
Ut collata daret fiducia. JUVENAL. 15, S. 147.

their systems may appear in speculation, they have ever been found impossible in practice. A few particular nations have attempted, for a time, to dispense with the customary distinctions of society, by expelling all the titles of honour, and the reverence of hereditary rank; but the various degrees of life have still arisen, in some other form and character, and baffled every endeavour to cast over the wide prospect of the social world so dreary and blank an uniformity. You may destroy the aristocracy of birth. You may blot out the names of venerable families. You may debase the living monuments of ancient virtue and wisdom and integrity; but nothing will result from the destruction, but the conferring an entire ascendancy on the fluctuating aristocracy of wealth;—you may institute a change, which shall degrade the love of

honour to exalt the love of money, and postpone fame to avarice, and supersede the direction of the highest to enhance the operation of the meanest human principle of conduct ; but degrees of influence and power can never be totally obliterated. It has been continually repeated, and it is palpable to common observation, that if the most exact division of national property were calculated, and each individual were, this moment, to receive his due proportion, in an hour after the distribution the equality would be violated ; the prudent would already have gained on the imprudent : the crafty have imposed on the unsuspecting ; the active have surpassed the indolent. Any human interference to restrain these natural effects, would be nothing less than an attempt to counteract the fair emoluments of virtue, and repair the just deficiencies

of vice. While the right of property remains inviolable, and mankind vary in their faculties of body and of mind, there will of necessity be gradations in the constitution of society. They subsist by an original ordinance of the Creator. There may not be degrees of nominal rank, but there must be degrees of power; for wealth is as much power, as poverty is weakness; and there is no means of emancipating the poor from the authority of the rich, the labourer from the employer, the mouth that hungers from the hand that feeds it, but by tearing down the barriers which separate and secure the property of individuals, and returning to the licentiousness of savage life, that all may indiscriminately be involved in a state of utter and abject wretchedness, and become abandoned to the unrebuked oppression of the strongest among men,

to the rage of the beasts of the forests, to the violence and the inclemencies of seasons, and to the unalleviated sufferings of accident and of disease.

Since, then, wherever man exists, he is destined by an irreversible decree of the Creator, either to exercise authority over his fellow-creatures, or to submit himself to the authority of others:—since, by every propensity of the human heart, this diversity of estate must be the source of hostile dispositions; “ greatness delighting to shew itself by effects of power, and baseness to help itself by shifts of malice* :”—since the consequent irritation of public feeling must keep alive a continual struggle to shake off or to confirm the shackles of dependance:—since every contest must prove more and more destructive to the stock of national hap-

* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity. Vol. II. p. 418.

piness, and be productive of depopulated fields, of wasted harvests, of ruined cities, of childless parents, of widowed mothers, and of orphaned infants, during the terrors of the conflict :—since defeated insurrection must necessarily be followed by a servitude less lenient, imbittered by the recollection of past hostility, and guarded by additional restraints, from the possibility of future resistance :—since revolution only promises a field of blood, the rending of familiar ties, the degradation of the great to miserable and unaccustomed privations, the promotion of unworthy persons to their vacated ascendancy, and an unprofitable change of masters to the large body of the people :—since, by the inevitable conditions of humanity, life is thus destined to be passed amid the strife of opposite interests, it is evident that, to secure the peace and con-

sequent happiness of society, some interposing influence is demanded, which may moderate between the contending inequalities ; which may restrain the arrogance of authority, and calm the restlessness of subjection ; which may appease the suspicions of the powerful, and silence the importunate jealousy of the inferior ; which may ensure the tranquillity of the whole, by suggesting motives of mutual benevolence, amid such innumerable provocations to mutual malignity.

If mankind had been abandoned by the Almighty to float at random on the stormy sea of passion, without any star in heaven to regulate the direction of their way, there is one universal principle of nature that would effectually have perpetuated the animosities of society :—
“ Pride, which setteth the whole world out of course”—pride doing and suffer-

ing—pride active in the great, fostered by the contemplation of its own superiority, and demonstrated in arrogance and oppression—pride passive in the weak, silently brooding over the sense of humiliation, and the bitter recollection of indignities—pride triumphant, seizing on every opportunity of augmenting its exactions—pride constrained, availing itself of every occasion of open vengeance or clandestine retribution, would have rendered the enmities of life as violent as the worst passions of the human soul, and as permanent as the pulsations of the human heart. But while the multitudes of the earth are thus collected together, like the children of Israel in the wilderness, to lament their desolate estate, with a barren rock and an unprofitable waste before them, the rock is struck, and the waters of consolation flow around them:—"that rock," says St. Paul, "is Christ."

* “ Give me the hearts of all men humble,” exclaims Hooker, “ and what is there that shall destroy the peace of the world ?” The Messiah has made humility one of the graces indispensable to the attainment of the rewards of his religion. But he has not only commanded to his disciples the cultivation of this virtue. He has presented to our minds the knowledge of those sacred truths, which may control the elations of the breast. He has, through the medium of the Gospel, discovered to us the objects, that operate as the provocatives to arrogance, in other points of view than those in which they are naturally apprehended, and under circumstances and relations, that display their comparative insignificance.

The conception of such a Deity, as is made known to us in the Gospel,—of a Deity, infinite in his attributes, surveying

our most private actions, and conscious of our most secret thoughts, the author of our mortal life, and the arbiter of our immortal destination, can never be entertained without communicating to the mind something of the temperance of truth. The simple and unconnected act of looking beyond the world, to an object of dependance and of terror, has of itself a very considerable efficacy in calming the impulses of pride, and restraining the murmurs of discontent. While every desire is anticipated, every sentiment re-echoed with applause, every opposition stifled, the powerful might be too readily betrayed into an oblivion of their actual estate. They might be tempted to receive too credulously the servile whisperings of adulation round them. Surveying themselves in the representations of flattery, while they estimated others by

the knowledge of their imperfections, they might be tempted to conceive that their superiority was of a higher nature, than that which is conferred by the mere external additions of their fortune, and become arrogant in authority, and tyrannous in its exercise.—The conception of the majesty of God most effectually disperses these delusions. It separates between the real littleness and the factitious dignity. It puts aside those glittering appendages of distinction which encompass the mighty of the earth, and most impressively reveals them to themselves. It fulfils the office of that rigid counsellor, who, in the palmy state of Rome, when the triumph was advancing to the Capitol, was stationed in the car of the conqueror, and continually repeated, amid the pomp of victory, as he held the glittering coronet before him: “Remember thou art

man*.” And while the belief in the existence of the Christian’s God teaches humility to the great, it also delivers to the lowly a lesson of submission. If it represses the injurious effects of power, by disclosing to the adoration of its possessors, a pre-eminence so infinitely exalted above all that the world can offer of greatness or distinction, that the little elevations of the earth appear to decline before it, and to shrink into inconsiderable dimensions, it also administers to the weak a very persuasive lesson of content. As the poor looks upward to the Deity, his understanding becomes habituated to the sense of inferiority ; he feels that his humbler destiny is no longer to be represented as an unjust exception ; he finds

* Quippe tenet sudans hanc publicus, et sibi consul
Ne placeat, curru servus portatur eodem.

JUVENAL, 10, 41.

that he occupies an appropriate place in the graduating system of creation; he perceives that, if he is bound by an obligation to submit, his superior acknowledges a higher authority, and that God is ever above the highest; he confesses, that to rule and to obey is an eternal ordinance and inviolable condition of existence; and he derives a consolation to the lowliness of his estate, by reflecting that the most favoured among mankind, however rich in the benefits of life, however affluent in wealth or fame, in talent or authority, standing as he does upon the earth,—in marked comparison with the infinite supremacy of God,—as on a brief and narrow isthmus, between the eternity of the past and the eternity of the future, must always show as insignificant to the view, as to the eye of some distant mariner appears the slow and solitary sea-

bird, careering in the fields of air, with the immeasurable canopy of heaven extended above her flight, and the immeasurable plains of ocean chafing and swelling underneath.

Pride naturally results from the perception of our own superiority, and if we would prove that “it is not made for man,” our arguments must be derived from the intimations of religion. When we would demonstrate the vanity or the wickedness of the passion, the task can only be accomplished, by shewing that the little acquisitions and endowments, which appear to exalt us above our fellow-creatures, are insignificant in comparison with the more vast and important considerations which constitute our equality. But these levelling considerations are essentially religious. Did we only contemplate mankind in their earthly rela-

tions, we should by no means find that the arrogance of the opulent and the powerful were obnoxious to an unmitigated censure. We might even be tempted to exceed in our indulgence ; to grant, not only impunity, but approbation ; to transpose, with Hume*, the honour and the reproach from the dispositions, to which they are attributed by the Gospel, and class pride among the virtues, and humility among the ignominious affections of the heart. As far as the mortal man only is concerned, pre-eminence of fortune confers not only an external elevation, but bestows the only moral superiority of which his nature is susceptible. We are so completely modified by cir-

* See the Inquiry into the Principles of Morals, 9th Section. Humility is there named among the monkish virtues, which Hume " transfers to the opposite column, and places among the catalogue of vices."

cumstance, that there is scarcely a more marked distinction between the different classes of the animal creation, than between the refined and cultivated being, whose prosperous destiny has allowed him the facilities of improvement, and the unlettered churl, who is the blind instrument of his instincts and his appetites, and whose intellect is incapable of reaching any thing above the most ordinary inventions of his craft. There are a few, who, like *Æsop* or *Epictetus*, may cast off the slough of their mean condition, and rise superior to circumstances ; but, with the generality of men, the rich are as widely separated from the poor, as knowledge is from ignorance, or refinement from barbarism. Their pursuits, their manners, their hopes, their fears, their sentiments, their pleasures, all are

different. There are no bonds of alliance between them. They scarcely possess a single point of sympathy, which is not common to the whole range of animal existence. There is in the rich the cultivated mind; there is in the poor the brute force that it may direct: there is the master and the slave; and, as the master looks down upon the slave, he may delight himself in contemplating the immeasurable space between them, and remark his own perfection, and derive new arguments of self-complacency, and remorselessly dismiss the wretch, as an outcast from all the tender sentiments of a kindred nature, to toil, unheeded, for the gratification of his avarice; or fall unpitied, in some gladiatorial show, to amuse the weary hours of his indolence. "Pride," says Selden, "may be allowed

to this or that degree* ;” but, without religion, who shall appoint its limits or its measure? Beings so dissimilar are only fellow-creatures in their exterior seeming. They are men, but they are not brothers. There is no mutual tie between them, till it has been demanded as a duty from the great, to equalize the painful disproportion, by familiarizing the minds of all men with that knowledge of the Gospel, which renders every individual, in a Christian

* *Table Talk*. “ When we approach a man, who is, as we say, at his ease, we are presented with the pleasing ideas of plenty, satisfaction, cleanliness, warmth, a cheerful house, elegant furniture, ready service, and whatever is desirable in meat, drink, or apparel. On the contrary, when a poor man appears, the disagreeable images of want, penury, hard labour, dirty furniture, coarse or ragged clothes, nauseous meats, and distasteful liquor, immediately strike our fancy. What else do we mean by saying, that one is rich, and the other poor? Regard or contempt is the *natural* consequence of their different situations in life.”—HUME’S *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, Sec. 6. Surely the poor owe some gratitude to the Gospel, which has saved them from this philosophical contempt.

country, more skilled in the important truths of morality and religion, than the most enlightened sages of antiquity ; and which teaches its disciples to overlook the differences, that are merely of the earth ; to estimate the spiritual graces of the soul above the trivial accomplishments of the understanding ; to forget that which is temporal, and attach themselves to that which is eternal ; and to find the sacred and indissoluble bonds of brotherhood in the paternity of one God, in the redemption of one Saviour, in the justification of one faith, in the sanctification of one Spirit.

There is also another truth communicated by the Gospel, in the knowledge of the superintending and directing providence of God, which necessarily conduces to allay the irritations arising from the inequalities of society. Those

objects, which provoke the arrogance of the powerful, and the jealousy of the indigent, are divested of their malignant properties, when they are regarded as the endowments of the Divinity, who maintains over the operations of his hand a regulating control, dispensing the occurrences of life ; accelerating or retarding the completion of our purposes, and distributing the various conditions of human existence, for the advancement of the eternal counsels of his wisdom, and the moral amelioration of his creatures. To the Christian's view, riches and distinction inspire no contemplations that elevate the soul ; poverty and depression afford no arguments that should abase it. Each estate is necessary to exercise mankind in those active occupations, by which the faculties are strengthened and refined. Each is responsible for a peculiar class

of duties, and produces, amid the different accidents, to which it is liable, the means of educating the heart to a peculiar class of virtues. One indeed appears to be more favourably regarded by the love of the Creator; but the Holy Spirit has pronounced, that this inestimable distinction is conferred, in a manner, which may at the same time intimate humility to the great, and encouragement to the humble*. Unless the volume of eternal truth tampers with us in a double sense, which it were impious for a moment to imagine, it is to the poor that the brightest hopes are beam-

* “One may see,” says Pope in one of his letters, “the small value God has for riches, by the people he gives them too.” Here Pope speaks as a satirist, but it has been of great importance to the morals of the rich, and the happiness of the poor, to make a separation between the possession of worldly prosperity, and the favour of the Almighty. This is the work of christianity.

ing, and that the blessings of salvation are most secure. “ There are to them*,” says Bishop Taylor, “ many promises and provisions, in that very capacity, they having a title to some certain circumstances and additionals of grace and blessing; yet to rich men our blessed Saviour was pleased to make none at all, but to leave them involved in general comprehensions, and to have a title to the special promises only by becoming poor in spirit and in preparation of mind.” Poverty is represented in the sacred volume, as arrayed in a religious dignity. It is consecrated to our respect by a variety of pious associations. It was to shepherds keeping their flocks by night, that the angel of the Lord came down with the harmonious declaration of the tidings of

* Sermon on Divine Judgments.

great joy. It was in humble habitations that the Christ was born, and that the Spirit of the Most High abided with him, and that he grew in favour with God and man. It was as a homeless wanderer that he walked the earth, as the ambassador of spiritual hope ; and to the poor he spake the sublime announcements of his mission. It was from the ranks of poverty that the apostles of the truth were separated. “ It is the poor of this world,” says St. James, “ that God has chosen as his own*.” And to the Christian’s apprehension,—where vice has not attained them, and reversed the purposes of the Almighty ; where evil counsellors have not insinuated their lessons, and bereaved them of that faith, which is their peculiar grace, and dignity, and consolation, and

* St. James, chap. 2. v. 5

support,—there appears to shine a sacred radiance about their dwellings ; and the heart acknowledges them, as the representatives of Christ upon the earth*, and longs to secure to itself, by benevolent and gentle services, a claim upon their love, and an affectionate remembrance, in the moments of their devotion. There is nothing in the pomp and pageantry of life, when they are considered as the gifts of Providence, that should excite any haughty dispositions in the hearts of their possessors, or provoke the jealousy of the less endowed. When it is demanded by the voice of revelation, “ Who maketh thee to differ from another ?” and “ what hast thou that thou didst not receive † ?” The inquiry recals to our recol-

* See the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, from the 34th to the 40th verse.

† 1st Corinthians, chap. 4. v. 7.

lection, that the Almighty has as absolute a command over the distribution of his material, as of his spiritual, blessings ; that if he has intrusted them to our disposal, he has not wholly abdicated his authority ; that we hold them but as stewards of his benevolence, and are to employ them, by the direction of his scriptures. When we read, “ Lord, what is man that thou hast such respect unto him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him* ? ” we learn to look inward upon ourselves and our imperfections ; to compare the liberalities of the Creator with the deficiencies of our service ; and, if separated from the brighter benefits of this life, not to resent on our superiors the liberalities of Providence, as if they were the spoils of any human usurpation ; but to silence the suggestions

* Psalm, 143, v. 3.

of envy, nor let our “eye be evil because God is good *.”

In addition to these reflections, which are afforded by the Gospel, to confirm the peace between the different classes of society, and harmonize the public mind, under the enjoyment, or the deprivation, of temporal prosperity, the Messiah has revealed to us a hope, before which every perishable treasure becomes depreciated in its value.—What are the fairest emoluments this world can offer ; what is the very life, which they adorn and dissipate, when regarded in comparison with eternity?—It were senseless to declaim against “the boast of heraldry, and the pomp of power,” and all that may be bestowed upon mankind by the possession of knowledge, of beauty, or of wealth ; it were idle to expatiate on

* Matthew, chap. 20. v. 15.

the vanity of those external ornaments, which appear to aggrandize our being, and enhance the privilege of existence, if the earth were the only theatre of action, and the soul were not instinct with a principle of immortality. Objects derive their importance in our estimation from the associations with which they are connected, and the accompaniments by which they are surrounded. The pyramid that seems to soar majestically, amid the sands of the desert, would sink into insignificance, if situated at the foot of the mountain. The aspiring heir of immortality may look down upon the transitory attainments of pride, or avarice, or ambition. They may appear to him as things indifferent and contemptible. He confesses himself a wanderer and a pilgrim on the earth. His soul is wrapt in a more momentous interest. He is ever

rapidly advancing towards the glorious home of his repose, and he is careless of the accidents, that occur upon his way. But remove this distant prospect; take away this expectation of a higher destiny; and the good and evil of this present life are immediately enhanced in his opinion. His sentiments are changed towards them. Wealth and power, fame and title, riches and pre-eminence, are only valueless and empty, when surveyed from the heights of revelation, to the downward scan of the immortal spirit; but when our being is dispossessed of its divinity, and brought level to their height, “these little things are great to little man*.” If indeed this life be all; if death be an eternal slumber; if there be no morning that shall dawn beyond the grave, they acquire to themselves a real dignity, and an incal-

* Goldsmith's Traveller.

culable importance. They become the only objects, by which the affections can be influenced, or the energies awakened. They are suddenly rendered indispensable to our felicity. They may perhaps glitter with a deceitful brightness, but, if theirs be the only light, that shines, amid the gloom around us, theirs is the light which we must follow. With nothing but the charms of sense to love and hope for, life is changed in its import and its purposes. Instead of an instrument of good and a sacred trust from the Almighty, we survey it merely as a means of sensual gratification. We become involuntarily the disciples of Epicurus, and exalt pleasure as our god, and regard the virtues only as they administer to the zest or the duration of our enjoyment*. There is no longer any

* Cleanthes Epicuri discipulus, jubebat eos qui audiebant, secum ipsos cogitare pictam in tabulâ voluptatem pulcher-

other philosophy for us, than that which is the harbinger of the decay and the paralysis of nations*. In vain shall any equivocating teacher address us on the beauty of his ideal morals—pleasure, he informs us, is the purpose of our fragile being; and, however he may refine upon its nature, or attempt to explain away the grossness of his institutes, we receive his lessons according to the interpretation of our passions. We are solicited to excess,

rimo in vestitu et ornatu regali sedentem; præstò esse virtutes, ut ancillulas, quæ nihil aliud agerent, nullum suum officium ducerent, nisi ut voluptati ministrarent.

CICERO. *De Fin.* lib. 2. c. 21.

* “ The philosophy of Epicurus is ever ruinous to society. It had its rise when Greece was declining, and, perhaps, hastened its dissolution, as also that of Rome. It is now propagated in France and England, and seems likely to produce the same effects on both.”

GRAY'S *Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 113.

With regard to France, the fulfilment has fully answered the half oracular anticipations of the poet. God forbid, that a similar corruption of sentiment and opinion should ever, in our land, be the occasion of a similar judgment!

by the recollection of the speediness of our departure ; and we adopt the indignant sarcasm of the Apostle, “ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die *,” as the only rational principle of conduct †.

* I Corinthians, chap. 15. v. 32.

† These are the constant maxims of life with those who do not believe in the existence of a future state of retribution :—

“ Let us the future hours beguile,
 “ With mantling cup and cordial smile,
 “ And shed from every bowl of wine,
 “ The richest dro pon Bacchus’s shrine.
 “ For death may come with blow unpleasant,
 “ May come, when least we wish him present,
 “ And beckon to the sable shore,
 “ And grimly bid us drink no more.”

MOORE’S *Anacreon Ode*.

The morals of Anacreon were universal.

“ Dark are our fates, to-morrow’s sun may peer,
 “ From the flushed east upon our funeral bier ;
 “ Then seize the joys that wine and music give,
 “ Nor talk of death while yet ’tis given to live .
 “ Soon shall each pulse be still ; closed every eye ;
 “ One little hour remains, or e’re we die.”

Palladas. BLAND’S *Translation*.

Horace is full of the same motives to voluptuousness ; and Martial finds, in the contemplation of the tomb of Augustus,

The luxuries and the distinctions of life, seem to be cast down by the spirit of discord, as prizes to be surveyed with jealousy, contested with animosity, and lost with bitterest discontent. Wealth becomes the sovereign good, and a licentious avarice the universal passion. Poverty seems as an exclusion of the light of the sun from the ephemera that lives but in its beams.—Let no elder brother interpose;—let no parent too long encroach upon the anticipated inheritance. “The death of a father,” says a young disciple of Voltaire, “though not the most amiable is the most secret and sincere wish of an

an inducement to sensuality. Compare these impure and gross institutes with the following Christian Epigram of Doddridge:—

- “Live while you live, the epicure will say,
- “And give to pleasure every passing day;
- “Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
- “And give to God each moment as it flies.
- “Lord, in my view let both united be,
- “I live to pleasure, while I live to thee.

expectant son*.”—Without the dread of a possible punishment hereafter, which—however the heart may fortify itself in the armour of ungodliness—will sometimes clog the liberty of sin, and disturb the serenity of vice, with most tremendous apprehensions; without the dread of a punishment hereafter, what shall prevent the child from accelerating this anxious consummation? Well might Paley ask, “what father would not wish his son to be a Christian†?” In the absence of religious hope, youth appears the only season of enjoyment.—Already its irrevocable hours are bewailed, as too rapid and too few. Every moment, that retards possession, is impatiently resented, as so much of happiness abridged from the shortness of existence. The natural af-

* Standish's *Life of Voltaire*, p. 134.

† *Evidences of Christianity*.

fections perish before the importunity of passion and the avidity of enjoyment. Every heart is highly wrought and feverishly excited, with the grasping violence of the gamester.—Every individual, who, in the least interferes with our desires, whether it be the rich, who withholds his support to our profusion; or the poor, who denies himself to our pleasures, is contemplated as an hateful adversary, in the competitions of selfishness. Mankind are wholly occupied in unparticipated gratification, or invidious pursuit. The order of creation is interrupted and its proportions levelled.—And while the sea of life is thus agitated and disturbed, there is one immortal Being only, who may walk the ocean, and rebuke the troubled waters, with emphasis and power. It is Christ alone, who can restrain the tumults of the storm, and allay

the deadly and universal malignity of the contest, by again declaring the glad tidings of immortality, and demonstrating the nothingness of the passing treasures of the earth, when compared with the imperishable beatitude of Heaven.

The man, who lives under a continual sense of the sublime convictions of the Gospel, is influenced by a sentiment that humbles the mind, while it exalts the soul ; that depresses the human passions, while it elevates the spiritual affections. His thoughts are occupied with lofty and portentous arguments. He bears familiarly about him, an impression, that is kindred to the solemn feeling, with which the heart is filled, in the presence of the mightiest works of nature. He acknowledges, as the permanent disposition of his soul, that contempt of the honours and aggrandizements of the earth, with which

we all occasionally sympathize, when—as the summer sun declines upon our evening walk—or as the wide pavilion of the night is spread above our lonely meditations—or as the ocean is rolling at our feet its everlasting anthem to the praise of the Creator—the spark of our immortality is felt to glow more ardently within us, and mingles in more pure and intimate communion with the Divinity, by whom it was inspired.

Under the persuasion of those important truths, which have been delivered by the Messiah—though their complete effect has been retarded by the corruptions of the human heart—pre-eminence has laid aside much of its arrogance ; inferiority has lost much of its painful feeling of subjection. The Christian world has found that there are higher motives “ of respect than power and riches, and that

poverty and wretchedness are no just occasions of contempt*.” Humility has become the characteristic of superior birth, and of an early and ingenuous education. The morals of revelation have been effectual on the manners, even where they have failed to touch the affections of society; and “the rich man’s scorn and the proud man’s obloquy” have yielded to the semblance, at least, if not to the feeling, of a tenderness for the sensibilities of those who are beneath them.

“ Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se
Quam quodd ridiculos homines facit,”

was the opinion of Juvenal. Christianity has mitigated the severity of this affliction. The tone of the sarcastic voice,

* Hume justifies a contrary opinion. See Section 6, of the *Principles of Morals*. And he is right, speaking of men without religion.

the arrogant glance, that scorn might cast upon his dwelling, the sneer of vanity upon the rudeness of his garments ; all those outward demonstrations of pride, which prey upon the poor man's heart, which echo on his memory, and which return upon his dreams, have nearly been obliterated by the constant repetition of the instructions of the Gospel. Disgrace is no longer the inseparable companion of his adversity—shame is no longer confounded with his poverty—and, for the other ills of a subordinate condition, he can open in his Bible the abundant source of consolation ;—there is his support :—and how successfully it calms the soul, how benignly it inspires him with sentiments of patience and resignation, can only be fully understood by those who have visited the dwellings of the miserable, and

listened to the arguments of consolation that are familiar in the cottages of Christian poverty, and in the chambers of Christian sorrow.

CHAPTER I.

Sect. II.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE
HAPPINESS OF THE DEPENDANT FROM
THEIR INFLUENCE ON HIS SUPERIORS.

THAT devout humility which results from a belief in the doctrines of the Gospel, is rather the source of retired contemplation than a vigorous principle of action. It is incompatible with evil, but in itself can hardly be denominated a positive good. It is rather the fruitful soil, on which the virtues may be raised, than an express and irrelative excellence. If the Redeemer had only delivered to mankind those lessons, by which the earth and its attainments and pursuits are degraded in our estimation, the devout disciples of his religion had

lost all bitterness of competition, but they had also wanted every inducement to exertion. They had justified the accusations of Rousseau, and indolently refused to encounter in a race, which only promised to recompense their success with a reward that they despised *. A society of real Christians had been in a state of rest, like the form of Adam, ere his Maker had awakened it into being.—The Almighty has breathed the breath of life into the body.—He has not endured that this “ cold obstruction”

* Cette religion, n'ayant nulle relation particulière avec le corps politique, laisse aux lois la seule force qu'elles tirent d'elles-mêmes, sans leur en ajouter aucune autre, et par-là un des grands liens de la société particulière reste sans effet. Bien plus; loin d'attacher les cœurs des citoyens à l'état, elle les en détache comme des toutes les choses de la terre: Je ne connais rien de plus contraire à l'esprit social. Une société de vrais Chrétiens à force d'être parfaite, manquerait de liaison; son vice destructive serait dans sa perfection même, &c. &c. &c. *Contrat Social*, lib. 4. chap. 8.

should exist ; he would not that the noble faculties of his creatures should be thus lost in the lethargy of inaction ; and he has endowed them with an impulse, a direction, and a purpose, by demanding of them the duties of a strenuous benevolence, and by proposing a requital of eternal happiness or eternal misery, as the reward of their obedience, or the penalty of their omission.

When Bayle, in one of those extraordinary paradoxes, which he had a habit of advancing, for the display of his learning and his ingenuity, maintained that atheism was better than idolatry* ; or, in other words, that no religion was more tolerable for a state, than one which was imperfect ; it was admirably answered by Montesquieu, “ that whatever truth might appertain to his assertion as it

* *Pensées sur la Comète, &c.*

concerned the people, it was absolutely false as it related to their rulers*.” The multitude are liable to the influence of many circumstances that might, for a little while, and in an inferior degree, sustain the practice of virtue and deter from the perpetration of offence. The terrors of the law, the desire of popular respect, the prosecution of their worldly interest, till the human mind had become totally corrupt, and learnt, under the unrebuked direction of the passions, to call good evil, and evil good, might act as substitutes for the restraints and motives of religion. But these considerations fail in their persuasion, in proportion as our situation is exalted above the level of ordinary men.—As for interest; those who tread the most elevated walks of life, have no other to pursue than the

* *Esprit des Loix*, Book 24. ch. 2.

full fruition of their passions. As for opinion ; they are raised above the vulgar clamour of reproach, and in their bright and conspicuous seclusion, their own sentiments are reverberated by every echo that surrounds them. And as for the law ; they, who are the distributors of justice, may ever find the means of eluding its severity. “ The laws reach but a very little way, and it is upon the great that their use and potency depend*.” There is an eminence of power in every state, which always must inherit a very liberal impunity. The capacity of mischief will always be commensurate with the ability for good. They who have been raised by Providence as the “ revengers to execute wrath upon those that do evil †,” are of themselves re-

* Burke's Works, Vol. II. p. 260.

† Romans, 13 ch. 4 v.

sponsible to no other jurisdiction than that of the Divinity, whose ministers they are. To them there are no other terrors, than those that dwell around the throne of God ;—no other retributions, than those which are gloomily overshadowing the long perspective of their eternity. The powerful may love religion, and yield themselves gently to the hand that abridges their dominion ; or they may fear religion, and with difficulty submit to its inhibitions, and violently beat the breast against the barrier *,—against the only barrier,—that would circumscribe the scope of their licentiousness, or their exactions, or their cruelty. “ The rich, the great, the prosperous, would be delighted to learn there

* This is the expression of Montesquieu. *Esprit des Loix*, Book 24. ch. 2.

was no God*.” But that unrighteous flatterer would teach a most miserable lesson for mankind, who should emancipate their souls from the salutary apprehensions of an inspecting and avenging Deity. He would let loose the criminal affections to range abroad in unlimited malignity. He would level the only impediment that subsists between Abimelech and his lust, Pharaoh and his cruelty, and Ahab and his usurpations. “ If,” says Voltaire, “ the world were to be governed by atheists, it were as well to be submitted to the immediate domination of those fiends, who have been described as inveterately preying upon their victims †.” Whoever should insinuate

* Rousseau, Letter to Deleyre.

† Homélie sur l'Athéisme—“ Si le monde était gouverné par des athées il vaudrait autant être sous l'empire immédiat de ces êtres infernaux qu'on nous peint acharnés contre leurs victimes.”

into the hearts of the mighty of the earth those lulling and portentous blasphemies of the infidel, which would pretend that there is no God to mark them—and no penalties which threaten beyond the grave, would give the reins to passion, and mount her in a flaming chariot, that she might whirl, like Phaëton, with boundless and irregular impetuosity along her elevated course, and scatter a withering desolation upon the realms beneath.

Without insisting on the seductions of that dangerous prosperity, which places the great in the more immediate vicinity of crime ; which surrounds them with the facilities of transgression ; which attracts towards them all those fawning subsidiaries of vice, who would conciliate their approach to favour through the interest of the bad affections ; and which gradually betrays them to effeminate and

ignominious sensualities, till, like Nero or Caligula, they become tyrannous from the bitter and resentful consciousness of infamy :—without insisting on that selfish oblivion of every sense of justice or of duty, which so frequently accompanies the intoxication of power, and would persuade its ministers to yield to no other law than their desires, as the Athenian people, whenever a supply was needed for their shows or dances, would carelessly condemn some more affluent inhabitant to death that they might lightly recreate themselves with the confiscation of his wealth * :—without insisting on

* This is mentioned by Lysias, Orat. 29, in Nicom, as a thing of very ordinary occurrence, and as reflecting no imputation on his audience. The money so procured was spent in what was called the public service, *i. e.*, shows and figure dances to amuse the indolence of the people. “ The strangers find,” says Lysias, Orat. 30. contra Phil, “ that if they do not contribute largely enough to the people’s fancy, they have reason to repent it.” Demosthenes takes

the insatiable nature of the passion, which agitates the ambitious, and compels him to acknowledge, like Buonaparte, “ Qu’il n’y a qu’une seule chose à faire dans ce monde : c’est d’acquérir toujours plus d’argent et de pouvoir * :”—without insisting on the corrupting influence of power on the human mind, or on the obdurate and encroaching dispositions which are observable in those who

the greatest care to display his expenses for the pleasures of the people, when he pleads for himself “ *de corona*,” and exaggerates Midias’s stinginess in this particular, in his accusation of that criminal; “ All which, by the by,” concludes Hume, from whom these details are taken, “ marks a very iniquitous judicature; and yet the *Athenians valued themselves on having the most legal and regular administration of any people in Greece.*”—Note C. C. Vol. I.

* This is taken from a speech of Buonaparte to M. de Melzi, to dissuade him from an act of generous patriotism, he said—“ Ne donnez pas dans cette philanthropie romanesque du dix-huitième siècle : il n’y a qu’une seule chose à faire dans ce monde ; c’est d’acquérir toujours plus d’argent et de pouvoir, tout le reste est chimère.”—MME. DE STAEL *on the French Revolution*.

love and seek it, and which alone would be sufficient to disturb the happiness of their dependants ; it may with confidence be affirmed that, unless some principles of religion confer the right to rule, and prescribe the duty to obey, the possessors of dominion would, by the very circumstances of their situation, be constrained to tyranny, as their only instrument of defence against the dangers attendant on pre-eminence.

Suppose that the most popular leader, in some moment of strong national excitement and distress, were raised to the direction of affairs by the general consent of his countrymen ; for a little while he might maintain his uninterrupted sway. As long as the emergencies, to which he owed his elevation were in force, he might be attended by a voluntary obedience, and hold his sceptre by the fair

and perfect tenure of opinion. The external difficulties, by uniting the passions of the people in one common interest, might be to him, what Carthage was to Rome, his security against domestic rebellion. But an authority, supported on such an airy basis, would be shaken with every breath of fortune. The first pause, which allowed an opportunity for enthusiasm to cool, would also afford an hour for ambition to devise the destruction of a rival, for envy to depreciate his successes, for slander to blast the laurels upon his brow, for detraction to assoil the brightness of his trophies, and for discontent to murmur her reproaches, as she canvassed the deficiency between the real benefits of his command, and the exaggerated hopes that had authorized his elevation. With these passions operating against him, there would grow up

a natural enmity between the sovereign and his subjects. Their interests would become distinctly opposite ; he would no longer be sacred in the estimation of the public, as the protector of their safety, but abhorred as the usurper of their liberties. They would continually encroach on his authority ; they would represent his actions, as they appeared tinted by the hues of their own jealousy. They would act towards him as the plebeians* of ancient Rome acted towards the Patricians, and be dissatisfied, while he was distinguished by a single privilege or immunity ; they would ever more and more invade his sovereignty, which would be gradually wasted by new submissions that authorized more exorbitant demands,

* “ Tant qu’il resta quelques privilèges aux Patriciens ; les Plébéiens les leur ôtèrent.”—MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*. Lib. 11. c 16.

“ Till kingly power, thus ebbing out, would be
Drawn to the dregs of a democracy *.”

Admitting the truth of those moral axioms of society, which teach us that rule will naturally beget opposition; that ascendancy excites the evil passions of the inferior; and that malignity ever follows pre-eminence like its shadow; this is the very mildest course of events in which his destiny could move. The more ordinary course is of a darker and more sanguinary character. The general progress of the popular idol is from flattery and triumph, to assassination and insults on the dead. The blameless execution of the regal duties would be no defence against this savage consummation †. The righteous judgment, the un-

* Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. Part I.

† Out of the fifty-eight Emperors who preceded Constantine, fifty were either killed in war or assassinated by their relations.

biassed protection of the weak and the unhappy, the reformation of public grievances and hereditary abuse, if they conciliated distant friends, would exasperate domestic enemies. His virtues would excite the hostility of those, whose interests were compromised in the success of honesty and justice. The patriot monarch might have loyal subjects in the fields and in the villages ; but his foes would be those of his own household, who had long battered on the rank corruptions of the court ; and who, disappointed of their infamous emolument, would but lightly hesitate in vindicating the wrongs of their avarice by the poison or the stiletto. All history would inform him, that in his dangerous elevation there was but one event to the evil and the good ; that if the tyrant has to dread the conspiracies of the oppressed, the virtuous may also

tremble at the impending machinations of the wicked ; that on the throne of unchristian kingdoms there is one violent conclusion to the vices of Caligula, or the innocence of Pertinax. In these circumstances wisdom would advise his abdication, before he suffered this reverse of favour. But such conduct is not to be expected from that inherent love of superiority, which is so invincible in the unregenerated heart. Neither is it consistent with the principles of human nature that he should endure, in passive indifference, to watch the gradual diminution of his authority, and be exposed, in unresisting quietness, to the perils that threatened its extinction. He would be compelled to raise some barrier between himself and the people.—Though the sovereign had been elected, by the public voice, to the distribution of em-

pire ; though he had received the crown by the most perfect human right, that the imagination can conceive, by the unanimous acclamations of his willing subjects ; without some assurance for the constancy of their allegiance, some support for the conservation of his authority, his fall would be as rapid as his rise ; and, like Robespierre or Massaniello, he must expect, in the fickleness of the public mind, to be suddenly hurled down from his tottering pre-eminence, unless he can discover for himself some less violable protection than the continuance of his popularity.

In these difficulties there are only two means of safety to which he can address himself, *LAW OR FORCE* *. Without re-

* "*Horum uter uti nolimus, altro est utendum. Vini volumus extingui? Jus valeat necesse est, id est, judicia, quibus omne jus continetur. Judicia displicent, aut nulla*

ligion the first of these is unavailable. To attempt to negotiate with a godless people, to prescribe the extent of the prince's rule, to appoint the limits of the subject's liberty, and to confirm the covenant by the sanctity of oaths were with them, of course, superfluous. Such engagements owe all their efficacy to a belief in the existence and the retributions of the Deity, who is invoked to witness them. Without the awful sanction of religion, they are but empty forms and insignificant observances. The ratification of the terms might afford the subject of a riotous holiday * ; but atheism would cancel the bond and erase the signature. The most sacred assevera-

sunt? Vis dominetur necesse est ; Hæc vident omnes."—
CICERO *pro Sert.*

* As the engagements of the 14th July, 1790 and 1792, between Louis XVI. and the French people.

tions are but words, breath, air, to the ungodly multitude ; and the monarch, who should place reliance on so fragile a security, would only afford an hour of confidence for conspirators to assemble unsuspected, and for insurrections to be deliberately organized. The crowd would carelessly forget the obligations they had lightly formed. They would defend their violation of them, by the authority and the example of the numbers who transgressed ; and they would suddenly make a booty of their sovereign, and riotously drag him to the scaffold ; while he, poor man, like Charles the First, or Louis the Sixteenth, was timidly retreating from his right, and studiously observant of his every action, lest he should at all exceed, and involuntarily overpass, the conditions of his compact.

No protection then would remain to

him but FORCE. The struggle, which in every state subsists, between authority and liberty, would break out into an open and avowed hostility. The monarch would be compelled to find his strength in the weakness, and his security in the debasement, of the people. He would be constrained to close up the channels of liberal discussion. "The servant, fee'd," would be retained in every house to pry into the actions of the mistrusted master. Spies would be systematically organized, who might instigate the crime and then obtain the rewards of information. The words would tremble on the lips of the speaker. Every man would doubt a secret enemy, where the ties of blood and kind associations most solicited the interchange of confidence. Justice would be bowed to the interests of the individual, and the subject would

be arraigned upon suspicion, and judged unheard, and condemned without appeal. The possessor of dominion would perceive that there was for him no safety, but in those terrible oppressions by which the hearts of men are broken; and he would be constrained to despotism, not more by the insatiable passions of his own breast, than by the invidious malignity of his dependants.

The principle of despotism is fear. “It is necessary,” says Montesquieu, “that in such a government terror should annihilate all spirit and extinguish every sentiment of ambition *.” And for himself the tyrant has nothing to apprehend, except that his oppressions should not be sufficiently severe; or that some impolitic

* Il faut de la crainte dans un gouvernement despotique. Il faut que la crainte y abbatte tous les courages et y éteigne jusque au moindre sentiment d’ambition. L. 3. C. 9.

gentleness should limit the purposes of his cruelty, or abridge the measure of his sanguinary precautions *. Savage as such a principle may sound, in the absence of Christianity, it was recognised as the only principle of government. It mattered little with whom the authority was resident, or under what denomination it was exercised; its maxims always were the same. Jealousy on the side of power, supporting itself by the weakness and intimidation of its subjects.

If the sceptre was held by an individual, like those secluded monarchs who

* There is a degree of oppression which rouses men to resistance, but there is another and a greater, which subdues and unmans them. It is remarkable that Robespierre himself was safe, till he attacked his own accomplices. The spirit of men of virtue was broken, and there was no vigour of character left to destroy him, but in those daring ruffians who were the sharers of his tyranny.—MACKINTOSH'S *Defence of Peltier*.

extend their depopulating sway over the regions to which the Gospel is still unknown, he lived in the continual peril of conspiracy and assassination. The sword of Damocles was ever hanging over him; he eyed his subjects with a fearful enmity. His apprehensions taught him tyranny, and his tyranny increased his apprehensions. With a quick suspicion of every superiority, that was at all conspicuous above the dreary waste, which had been levelled by his oppressions, he dealt the immediate death as the recompense of every moral or intellectual excellence, that might attract regard or conciliate affection. With a trembling vigilance he observed every movement of the multitude, that he might learn, whence danger appeared to threaten him, and where his security demanded weightier burthens and more rigorous restraints.

In every difficulty the cowardice of his heart confirmed the cruel maxims of his policy, and blood was his first, as it was his last, expedient. Did his subjects dare to murmur a remonstrance; hundreds suffered for their temerity. Were they still unwarned, thousands followed in the dark procession of the slaughtered. The increase of his danger or his suspicions only multiplied the number of the proscribed, till the world was taught to shudder at the very title under which the regal authority was exercised, and delivered the name of *tyrant* to posterity, as an everlasting appellation of reproach*.

* I prefer using my authorities from Hume's Essays, as coming from the enemies' quarter, they have the more weight. Conclusions derived from facts, collected by myself or any other friend of religion, might be considered as prejudiced judgments founded on *ex parte*, or garbled, evidence; no such objections can be alleged against the

Let it not be imagined, that the government assumed any milder character where it was not thus confined to the hands of

details of Hume, on the decisions that he may form upon them. He tells us, in Essay xi. Part 2,—“ That the Greek tyrannies were altogether horrible.” He supports the assertion by a note, part of which I have transcribed. “ The people, before the usurpation of Agathocles had banished six hundred nobles. Afterwards that tyrant, in concurrence with the people, killed four thousand nobles, and banished six thousand. He killed four thousand people at Gela. By Agathocles’ brother eight thousand were banished from Syracuse. The inhabitants of Ægista, to the number of forty thousand, were killed, man, woman, and child; and with tortures, for the sake of their money. All the relations, to wit, father, brother, children, grandfather, of his Libyan army killed. He killed seven thousand exiles after capitulation. It is to be remarked, that Agathocles was a man of great sense and courage, and is not to be suspected of wanton cruelty, contrary to the maxims of his age.”—Note B B, to the *Essay on the Populousness of the Ancients*.

The newly-settled colony of Heraclea, falling immediately into faction, applied to Sparta, who sent Herifidas with full authority to quiet their dissensions. This man, not provoked by any opposition, not inflamed by party rage, knew no better expedient than immediately putting to death about five hundred of the citizens. A strong proof how deeply-rooted these violent maxims of government were throughout Greece.—HUME, *Essay xi. Part 2.*

a single person, but shared with the nobles and the citizens.

Besides the Greek tyrannies, which Hume describes as “altogether horrible * , there was no medium in those days between a severe and jealous aristocracy, ruling over discontented subjects ; and a turbulent, factious, tyrannical democracy.” But, in reality, ought not those democracies themselves to be considered in the light of aristocracies † ? The citizens were in the place of nobles, and their licentious freedom was supported by the slavery of the people ‡ . The populace was an en-

* *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*. Page 431.

† “The republic of Athens was the most extensive democracy that is read of in history.” Hume.—“Yet, if we make the necessary allowances for the slaves and strangers, we shall find that no law was ever voted by a twentieth part of those who were bound to obedience to it.”—POTTER’S *Archæologia*.

‡ “Quoi ! la liberté ne se maintient qu’à l’appui de la

chained populace *, and their constraints were oppressive, in proportion to the largeness of the masters' liberty. The weight that was removed from the en-

servitude?—*pent-être.*”—ROUSSEAU, *Contrat Social*.—Livre iii. c. 13.

* It is very little considered how widely the bonds of servitude were spread, and how entirely the large body of the people, before they received the emancipation of Christianity, were depressed beneath them. In Athens, the citizens were thirty thousand, the slaves four hundred thousand. In Sparta, the Helotæ were so much more numerous than the freemen, that, lest they should obtain an overwhelming superiority, it was customary for bands of the Spartan youth to be sent secretly, from time to time, into the country, that they might murder every Helot whom they met. This was a measure of common political precaution. There is no reason for supposing that the numbers of slaves, in Greece, exceeded that of other nations. In comparison with Italy, the reverse appears to have been the case. Ten thousand slaves of a day have often been sold for the use of the Romans, at Delus in Cilicia. When it was once proposed in the senate, to mark the slaves by a peculiarity of dress, the motion was rejected on the plea of its danger, lest it should become the means of informing them of their great numerical superiority. And we read of individuals, who were in possession of many hundreds, and even thousands, of these miserable dependants.

franchised neck, was cast as an additional burthen on the yoke of the enslaved. As the immunities were more liberal the bondage was more severe *. But with this miserable exception, the large body of mankind were submitted to the same afflictive maxims of government. Whether they acknowledged one or many masters ; whether the tyrant extended over the people a sad and uniform humiliation ; or whether the few arrogant members of a nominal democracy, made a prey of the national liberty, the subject was every where obnoxious to the same austerities, and the depositaries of power were directed by the same selfish and passionate rules of policy, which directed them to found the permanency of

* Plutarch says, that “ in Lacedæmon the free were the most free, and the slave was the most oppressed.”—*Life of Lycurgus*.

their own authority, in the depression of their dependants.

It is terrible to contemplate the barbarities to which this system naturally conducted. I would take Athens for the example. It was acknowledged to have been the most lenient government of antiquity. The mind that is refined to gentleness and pity by the spirit of the Gospel, can scarcely bear to dwell on the ruthless exercise of dominion, which is exhibited in the pages of its history. The tyranny exercised by the Athenian people over those who were subject to their control, surpasses description or belief. No accumulations of reproachful epithet, or opprobrious metaphor, could compass their savage abuses of authority. The despotism of one is bad ; but the despotism of many is incalculably worse. Not to mention their wanton acts of

cruelty, of caprice, of aggression, and of injustice, which were as familiar with them—perhaps more familiar—than with any of the most sanguinary tyrants, whose names are infamous in the annals of mankind; but to confine myself strictly to the enormities, which originated in their political morals, we shall find, by looking at the conduct of that brilliant people, that the vaunted democracy of Athens, was animated by all the selfish passions, was directed by all the narrow principles, was supported by all the ignominious arts, and iniquitous precautions, which characterize the dominion of the despot. No Dionysius or Agathocles ever exhibited a more timid and ungenerous suspicion of their subjects, or followed up their suspicions with more of the oppressive vigilance of terror.—Riches were the objects of jealousy. They

might be made the means of obtaining too commanding an influence in the republic; and the wealthy existed, therefore, in a state of constant persecution and alarm. “ While I had riches,” says Charmides, “ I was obliged to caress every informer. Some imposition was continually laid upon me; and I was never allowed to travel or be absent from the city. Now, I am poor, I look big, and threaten others; the rich are afraid of me; I am become a kind of tyrant in the city*.” Fame was an object of jealousy: nothing of excellence or wealth or reputation might, with impunity, overtop the level of the democracy. The unrelenting people proscribed every supe-

* Xenophon, Banquet of Socrates.—“ Whether a man was a citizen or a stranger among that people, it seems, indeed, requisite, either that he should impoverish himself, or that the people should impoverish him, and, perhaps, kill him into the bargain.”—HUME's *Essays*, Part ii. 11.

riority, as a thing of dangerous consequence* ; and so susceptible was the prudence of their tyranny, that it instigated them even to attack the honourable distinctions which recompense superior virtue, and Aristides was banished for the celebrity of his justice.

But if the arrogant severities of the despot multitude thus aspired to depress and intimidate the eminent, it was on the slave that the more rigorous inflictions of their enfeebling and demoralizing ascendancy were lavished.—As their poets sung, or their orators declaimed, upon the glories of liberty, the Athenians

* “ Every prevailing power, in the Grecian republics, was seen to meet with a confederacy against it, and that often composed of its former friends and allies. The same principle of jealous emulation, or *cautious politics*, produced the Ostracism of Athens, and the Petalism of Syracuse, and expelled every citizen whose fame or power overtopped the rest.”—HUME’S *Essay on the Balance of Power*.

mingled their tumultuous plaudits. They erected temples to her honour, and they worshipped her as divine ; but their love was a jealous love, and it taught them to monopolize her smiles. Their adoration was not a noble sentiment, but a party feeling. It emanated from pride and selfishness, rather than generosity and devotion. They magnified themselves, and not the divinity they served. They rejoiced to lead along the solemn and the fair procession to her praise, and to hymn her brightness, and to shake their incense, and to wave their myrtle branches before her shrine ; but the victims that they immolated at her altar, were the just prerogatives of nature, and the birth-right inheritance of man. . The streets, the fields, the villages, the habitations, of the Athenian, were crowded with his troops of slaves ; and he was so per-

fectly aware of the wretchedness of their subjection, that the very love of freedom, which he prized as the most valuable benefit of his own existence, instructed him to dread the vengeance of the wretched beings, who were crouching beneath the lash and the impositions of his authority. Ignorant of those religious commandments, which enjoin the kindness of the powerful and gratitude of the weak; which confer a stability on the interchange of benevolence, by rendering them offices of piety and devotion; he felt that the bonds of affection* were but feeble instruments, and that oppression was his sole security. In exact correspondence with this sentiment he resented their slightest errors with the

* “Metus et terror est infirma vincula Caritatis,” (TACITUS, *Agri. Vit.*), an universal maxim, wherever religion has not annealed and strengthened the “vincula caritatis.”

most merciless inflictions. He tutored * them to their duty, “ as wild beasts are tamed †,” with stripes and cruellest severities. He debased their natures by habitual licentiousness ; he endeavoured to extinguish in their breast every spark of generous and manly feeling, by illiberal education, by accustoming them to blows and indignities and insults ; by sub-

* “ This was the condition of slaves at Athens, which, though deplorable enough, if compared with that of their fellow-sufferers in other cities, seems easy, tolerable, and not to be repined at.”

“ They were wholly at the command of their masters, to be employed as they saw convenient in the worst and most wretched drudgeries ; and to be used at their discretion, punished, starved, beaten, tormented, and that in most places without any appeal to superior power, and punished, even with death itself. And, which yet farther enhanced their misery, they had no hope of recovering freedom for themselves, or procuring it for their posterity, but were to continue in the same condition as long as they lived ; and all the inheritance they could leave their children was their parents’ miseries, and a condition scarce any way better than that of beasts.”—POTTER’S *Archæologia*.

† POTTER’S *Archæologia*.

duing the energy of the mind, by the unmitigated pressure of labour and of want ; and by degrading them, as far as his ability could reach, to a state of moral and intellectual equality, with those beasts who were the less pitiable partners of their afflictions.—These miserable dependants on the will, the passions, and the caprices of their master, were so entirely outcasts from all human sympathy, that Plato denied to them the exercise of the first right of nature, the right of self-defence ; and declares, that* “ the slave who defends himself, and kills a freeman, deserves to be punished as a parricide.” If this enormous tyranny aspired to exclude its subjects from the rights of natural justice ; it also condescended, with a cautious atrocity, and a

* PLATO, *de Legibus*.

timid savageness, to regulate the most minute oppressions. It strove to surround the giant multitude with chains, which might appear, perhaps, individually weak; but which were compulsory from their complication, and their intricacy, and their accumulated weight. The slave was interdicted from repeating the songs of the freeman. His voice was only permitted to give utterance to obscenities and grossness. He might not trust his memory with any strain that breathed of liberty, or of glory, or of inspiring sentiment. “Those are the songs of our masters,” said the Helot prisoners to the Thebans, who demanded of them the Odes of Terpander. “Those are the songs of our masters, and those we dare not sing*.” The miserable

* PLUTARCH'S *Life of Lycurgus*.

being was debased to an artificial ignominy, and depraved by an unnatural corruption. He was attainted by the vices of civilization, without being admitted to its refinements ; he was abandoned to all the grossness of ignorance, while he was studiously dispossessed of all the rugged nobleness of the savage ; and then the philosopher pointed to the degraded being, with an air of self-approval and of triumph, and declared that, “ some men were created to be slaves *.”

“ The maxims of ancient politics †,” says Hume, “ contained in general so little humanity and moderation, that it seems superfluous to give any particular reason for the acts of violence committed

* ARISTOTLE, *Pol.* lib. i. ch. 2.

† *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations.*

at any particular period." It were, indeed, superfluous to inquire after the collateral and secondary causes of an effect, which proceeded from the vicious principle, on which their political societies were necessarily founded and supported. The grand occasion of these barbarities is palpable to the observation of every man, by whom it is not voluntarily overlooked. "There is no power but of God *," says the Apostle ; and they, who were in the discharge of government, felt a deep conviction of this truth. They felt that, unless religion conferred the right to rule, and prescribed the duty to obey, no firm and legitimate authority could exist ; that, by nature, no man could maintain any other dominion over his fellow-creatures than that which resolved itself into the usurpa-

* Romans, xiii. 1.

tion of superior strength, and was to be maintained by the exercise of force ; that, on worldly principles, the ruler could only calculate on the submission of his subjects, as on a service to be exacted by compulsion, and yielded from necessity. The ingenuity of the human mind could invent no amicable bond, on which the superior and the dependant could mutually rely, and hence originated the enormities of their mutual opposition. Depression, ignorance, and impoverishment, were among the necessary instruments of government. The weak were to be kept weak, the fallen were never to be permitted to arise. If there were any approach to equality of strength subsisting between the parties, there immediately commenced the struggle for pre-eminence. Then began the horrors of the domestic convulsion, the civil, or

the servile war.—Then were the fields uncultivated, and old age and childhood were left alone as the scanty tenants, and the feeble tillers of the soil ; then the city fell into decay, and the grass grew in the market-place ; then every vigorous arm, bearing desolation to the land, which it was created to protect, was occupied in impious hostilities, and the nation hollowed out its grave, while it ignorantly conceived itself to be digging the foundations of its freedom. And in all these contests for power, which the page of ancient history reveals to us, as excited by the severity, with which authority was exercised, and generally allayed by a more rigorous abuse, we find the same destructive principles universally in action. Whichever party was successful, the conqueror only thought of securing his victories by the extirpation of his oppo-

nents. The laurels upon his brow did not promise to him any permanent dominion, till they were dyed in the blood of *all* his adversaries. It was only, when the weak were humbled even below the degradation in which despair continues to be dangerous, that there ensued that kind of terrible repose, which is discovered at the break of morning amid the scattered ruins of the midnight tempest*. The

* This may perhaps receive an illustration from two extracts from HUME's *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*. "In ancient history we may always observe where one party prevailed whether of the nobles or the people, that they immediately butchered all the opposite party who fell into their hands, and banished such as had been so fortunate as to escape their fury—no form, no process, no law, no trial, no pardon. A fourth, a third, perhaps nearly half the city was slaughtered or expelled every revolution, and the exiles always joined foreign enemies, and did all the mischief possible to their fellow-citizens; till fortune put it in their power to take full revenge by a new revolution. And as these were frequent in such violent governments, the disorder, diffident jealousy, enmity which must prevail, are not easy for us to imagine in this age of the world."——
"Not to mention Dionysius the Elder, who is computed to

conqueror, sensible that he had no permanent defence to hope for, but in the disability of his opponents, crowned his victory with sentences of exile and proscription, and endeavoured to spread around him the silence and the solitude of the desert, that he might possess himself of the security of its peace*. Despotism was ever the starting-place and the goal of every

have slain above 10,000 of his fellow-citizens; or Agathocles, Nabis, and others, still more bloody than he; the transactions even in free governments were extremely violent and destructive. At Athens the thirty tyrants and the nobles, in a twelvemonth, murdered, without trial, about 1,200 of the people, and banished above half the citizens who remained. In Argos, near the same time, the people killed 1,200 of the nobles, and afterwards their own demagogues, because they had refused to carry their prosecutions farther. The people also in Corcyra killed 1,500 of the nobles, and banished 4,000.—Their numbers will appear the more surprising if we consider the smallness of these states. But all ancient histories are full of such circumstances.”

* “Proximus dies faciem victoriæ latius aperuit: vastum ubique silentium, secreti calles, fumantia procul tecta, nemo exploratoribus obvi-” —TACITUS, *Agricola*.

“Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.” —TACITUS, *Agricola*.

political contention. The people, urged beyond the possibility of endurance, rose against the tyrant, and then became a tyrant to themselves. They separated into factions and divisions which preyed upon each other, till their weakness solicited the invasion of the conqueror, who cast over the infuriated combatants his equal and indiscriminating chains;—or if not so;—wearied with the toil of desolation, and shuddering at the horrors of their work, they made a voluntary sacrifice of their frantic dream of liberty—of that liberty, which may be lost, but never can be regained*,—and, like Rome†, took refuge under the sceptre of a military tyrant, that they might crouch about his

* “Peuples libres!—Souvenez vous de cette maxime, on peut acquérir la liberté, mais on ne la reconvre jamais.”—ROUSSEAU, *Contrat Social*, L. ii. c. 8.

† Augustus cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa, nomine principis, sub imperium accepit.—TACITUS, *An.* 1. 1.

throne, and sue to him for a protection against themselves.

It should be remembered, that the nations, from whom these illustrations have been derived, were avowedly the most mild and civilized of ancient times, and that among them the possessor of authority was not entirely emancipated from the constraints of religion. The laws were either supposed to have been received by heavenly inspiration, or were confirmed by the approbation of oracles; and the terrors of a salutary superstition would direct and superintend their distribution. The oath was still binding to the conscience, and the Gods were feared as the avengers of its violation. The furies menaced the criminal with their retributions, and seemed to shake their glaring torches and their hissing snakes before the bewildered imagination of the guilty. In

the absence of the truth, these vague and uncertain apprehensions would perhaps restrain the tyrant from any useless and more wanton excesses of atrocity. Without these invisible limits to circumscribe the violences of passion, he had moved, like the wind of death, over the earth, and left all that dignifies and adorns humanity prostrate on the unpeopled desert of his dominion. The mind shrinks within itself at every attempt to speculate on the extent of the destruction, which would be wrought by the impetuous malignity of ungodly power, surpassing, in its vindictive penalties, the abominations of a godless people. “By taking away piety towards the Gods,” says Cicero, “in my opinion you would destroy all good faith, nay all human society—and the most excellent of virtues, justice*.” Hume

* *De Naturâ Deorum*, 1. 2

himself perceived these inevitable results of atheism. He was perfectly aware of the hideous consequences that track the progress of the unbelief, into which he would have seduced his countrymen; he confesses, that the annihilation of all civility and arts and learning and virtue and refinement would necessarily succeed on their adoption. In one of the last sentences, that close his Inquiry into the Natural History of Religion, he declares, that if we could find a people entirely destitute of faith, they would only be a few degrees removed above the brutes*.

For the happiness of the people then, it is evident that some religious con-

* *Natural History of Religion*, sec. 15.—To these testimonies may be added that of MACHIAVELLI.—Sono infami e detestabili gli uomini destruttori delle religioni, dissipatori de' regni e delle repubbliche, inimici delle virtù, delle lettere e d'ogni altra arte che arrechi utilità e honore alla humana generazione.—Lib. 1. *de' Discorsi*.

victions are requisite to restrain the excesses of their governors. "Atheism," says Lord Bacon*, "leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation."—We shall hereafter consider what advantages these human instruments might procure for the generality of mankind; but with him, who is in authority, they would all inevitably conduce to a more tyrannous oppression.—His "sense" would teach him, that they who govern must be feared, and that they who are feared are hated. His "philosophy" would assist him in improving on the arts of Machiavelli, in perfecting the constraints of his power, and in augmenting the exactions of his imposts.—The "laws" he would fabricate to his purposes; his will would tighten or relax them; his "reputation" would

* *Essay on Superstition.*

be founded on the vastness of his territories, and on the number and on the submission of his vassals ; and the indefinite emotions of his “ natural piety ” would plead, with very inefficient organs, against the causeless invasions, and the stern dominion, by which it was to be extended and confirmed. In this respect, then, we must agree with Montesquieu, that even the grossest superstition, which interposed a terror between authority and the severity of its exercise, would be deserving of our tenderness and our respect.—The Gospel does thus interpose ; and were we only to regard it, in its relations with our political welfare and security, it has a legitimate claim to our veneration.—But it does more—infininitely more—and it deserves a deeper and a holier gratitude as it is the source of more excellent effects.

Christianity does not only act upon the powerful as an impediment from crime, but as an incentive to good. Its action is not confined to the subordinate offices of withholding from transgression, and conferring a deeper emphasis on the reproaches of the conscience. It is not contented with a censorship, of which the occupation slumbers, where there is no enormity to arouse its rigours, but it is present in the habitations of the great, as a constant and unintimidated monitor, to reveal to them the intent of their pre-eminence ; to prescribe the limits of their command ; to appoint the channels, by which the stream of power is to flow, and to enforce a diligent application of its purposes. Every other thing becomes constrained in the neighbourhood of authority, and is modelled to its will, and confesses its subjection by compliance. The Gospel

is alone invariable and fixt ; it maintains to the monarch or the subject, the master or the dependant, the same imposing attitude of superiority ; it addresses each with the same tones of sacred and unequivocating truth ; it has no submissive morals ; it has no adulatory voice ; it has no mitigated terrors.—Like the Baptist, it repeats its warnings unchangeable and unchanged, whether they are pronounced in the palaces of Herod, or amid the savage dwellers of the wilderness. The Gospel is the word of God ; and when its ministers make its solemn admonitions heard above the soft and flattering seductions by which the mighty are so perilously encircled,—when emboldened by the insignia of their divine commission they vindicate the rights and privileges of humanity,—

when they dare, like Massillon*, to deliver, in the presence of princes and of nobles, the uncourtly truths, that the people do not exist for the convenience of their rulers, but that their rulers are appointed to an important charge, as the instruments of God's visible providence, for the welfare and protection of the people, they address the great with the only authority which power has not the ability of disputing ; and reclaim, as it were, the delegated trust from the hands of man, by whom it might be betrayed, to restore it to the unerring distribution of the Deity, by whom it had been confided.

Christianity has thus dared to speak, and it has not spoken without effect.—
“ The Christian religion is incompatible

* I allude more particularly to *Le petit Carême*, the sermon *Sur l'Humanité des Grands envers le Peuple*.

with Despotism*.” Wherever the Gospel has taken root and flourished, it has produced the fruit of a more lenient govern-

* “La religion chrétienne est éloignée du pur despotisme, c’est que la douceur étant si recommandée dans l’Evangile, elle s’oppose à la colère despotique avec laquelle le Prince déferait justice et exercerait, ses cruautés.—Pendant que les Princes Mahométans donnent sans cesse la mort, ou la reçoivent, la religion chez les Chrétiens rend les Princes moins timides et par conséquent moins cruel.”—MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*, lib. 24. c. 3.

Bolingbroke, in the following passage, renders Christianity the highest praise in its political effects that any system for ameliorating the condition of mankind could possibly receive. It is the more valuable as coming from an enemy.—“The political views of Constantine in the establishment of Christianity, were to attach the subjects of the empire more firmly to himself and his successors, and the several nations that composed it to one another, by the bonds of a religion common to all of them; to soften the ferocity of the armies; to reform the licentiousness of the provinces; and, by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire so often and so fatally broken.”—He adds, “No religion was ever so well proportioned, nor so well decocted, as that of Christianity seemed to be to all these purposes.”—BOLINGBROKE’S *Works*, vol. iv. p. 395, quoted by Leland.

ment ;—it has produced a consideration for the welfare of the subject. When the Gospel declared it to be the will of the Almighty that mankind should live in charity together, and appointed the benevolence of the heart as the measure of our everlasting happiness, it communicated a principle of confidence to the different classes of society. The powerful were instructed, by the experience of three centuries, that they might rely on the dispositions of a Christian people. When Constantine established the faith of Jesus as the religion of the empire,—though its disciples, for so long a period, had been attacked by every variety of persecution which the ingenuity of malice could devise,—not one of them had ever been detected as the accessory of any of those innumerable conspiracies and insurrections which had been

associated against the lives of their emperors. Tertullian, in his *Apology* for the Faith, challenges the enemies of the Gospel to name a single individual of his faith who had been accused of a participation in such offences*. Rendered confident by so long and so rigorous a trial, the superior was emboldened gradually to relax the fetters, by which his dependants were constrained. His newly-learned religion called upon him to consult their happiness, and he dared intrust them with the liberty of being happy, because the Gospel was to him a continual assurance, that that liberty should not be abused.

“According to ancient practice, all checks were on the inferior to restrain him to the duty of submission; none on

* TERTULLIAN, *Apol.* 35, 36, 37. See also GIBBON, chap. 20.

the superior, to engage him to the reciprocal duties of gentleness and humanity*.” This was in the common course of nature, which is insatiable in the pursuit of power, and when gained only studious of its defence†. Under the influence of the faith, those institutions, which had been raised as another barrier for the safety of the strong, have gradually changed in their purpose and their operation, and become the protection of the weak. Advocates have arisen in princes and in nobles to vindicate the liberty and plead against the oppressing

* HUME’s *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*.

† Buonaparte’s admonition to the son of Louis is a good illustration of the principles of ungodly power. The boy was destined to be Grand Duke of Berg.—“ N’oubliez jamais dans quelque position que vous placent ma politique et l’intérêt de mon empire, que vos premiers devoirs sont envers moi, vos seconds envers la France ; tous vos autres devoirs, même ceux envers les peuples, que je pourrais vous confire, ne viennent qu’après.”

The above was printed in the *Moniteur* of July, 1810.

of the people. Every unjust enactment has been redressed or mitigated by an ardent and liberal spirit of reform; every partiality has been encountered by the remonstrances of those who were themselves uninjured by its exclusions, and who, actuated by the love of the Creator, were solicitous of no earthly honour in the promotion of the happiness of his creatures*.

Wherever power exists, Christianity has subdued the harshness of its effects.

* The Gospel gave a mild character to the laws of the rudest nations that has no parallel in unchristian times and countries.—“The laws of the Visigoths required the Bishops to defend the poor against the oppression of the rich, and against the injustice of Judges in Courts of Judicature. Charlemagne and Louis recommended to their subjects to love God more than themselves, their neighbours as themselves, and to do nothing to others which they would not wish to be done to themselves. A law of Charlemagne prohibits molesting the stranger; and founds the prohibition on Scripture authority. Basilius, Emperor of the East, ex-

Ungentleness to inferiors, oblivion of past services, severity in the exercise of authority, have been rendered infamous by the lessons of the Gospel, and become abhorrent from the kinder sentiments of regenerated man. The corruptions of the heart have cast many impediments in the way of the complete ascendancy of the Faith; but, notwithstanding their limitations, it has greatly and gloriously triumphed. An incalculable benefit has been obtained by exalting the virtues that are opposite to our selfishness, as the only honourable prin-

horted his son Leo to pity the widow's tears and the cries of the orphan, and to be bountiful to the poor, as he expected mercy from God: which exhortations tended to render his son and his subjects gentle and beneficent. 'The laws of Charlemagne, Louis, and Lotharius, represent widows, orphans, the poor and oppressed, as under the protection of God and the magistrate.'—RYAN'S *Effects of Religion*. Vol. II.

ciples of action, and by compelling the bad to prevaricate with their inhumanity, and conceal the vices that they had before fearlessly exposed. There lives not a single individual, whose childhood has been formed by the morals of Christianity, who would not feel indignant at the imputation of having practised, on any one of the inferior creatures that had been serviceable to his interests, or his pleasures, such barbarities as were exercised without remorse, in the most polished ages of antiquity, on beings of a kindred nature with ourselves.—What Christian could endure the thought that the old, domestic animal, which had become enfeebled in his employ, should be exposed, as the miserable bondsmen of the Romans were, when decay or accident had rendered them unnecessary, to perish of hopeless want on an island of

the Tiber*?—Is it supposed possible that any disciple of the Gospel would suffer his aged hound, or his drooping war-horse—as the elder Cato† did his slaves—to be starved to death, before his sight, and in his own house, rather than charge himself with the burthen of providing for their infirmities?

It is another merit of Christianity, that by its influence mankind have been restored

* SÆTONIUS *in Vita Claudii* —“ Quelques Romains les faisaient jeter tous vivans dans leurs viviers, pour engraisser des murènes.”—Mennais states this piece of barbarity, but does not quote his authority.

† A sufficient proof of the harsh manner in which slaves were used, “ we find,” says POTTER, Book 1. chap. 10, “ in the famous Roman Cato, a man celebrated in all ages for his exact observance of the strictest rules of justice. When his servants grew old, and unfit for labour, notwithstanding they had been very faithful and serviceable to him, and had spent their youth and strength in labouring for him; for all this, when years came upon them, and their strength failed them, he would not be at the expense of maintaining them, but either turned them away, unable to provide for themselves, or let them starve to death in his own family.”—The anecdote is from Plutarch.

to that brightest attribute of the golden age and the Saturnian reign, on which the elder poets delighted to expatiate.—“In those days,” says Plutarch, “there was neither lord nor slave.”—This ignominious distinction has been cast out, like an evil spirit from the earth, by the efficacy of the name of Jesus. The Gospel has restored every individual to his legitimate dominion over the energies of his mind and the labours of his hand; and all men, admitted to an equal liberty of virtuous exertion, have become equally restricted in their ability to disturb or to destroy. Slavery has retreated as the Faith extended. The bondsman was willingly received as the disciple of the Saviour, and the wretch, whom his fellow-creatures had abandoned as an outcast from their compassion, found a refuge in the mercies of his God.—“Act as ser-

wants to the Lord and not to men only," said the apostle of the Gentiles, "knowing that whatever good work any one doth, for that he shall receive of the Lord, whether he be a slave or freeman*"—But while he thus addressed the slave with higher principles of duty, and with animating arguments of consolation, he impartially remonstrated, that the masters also "should do the same things, moderating threatening, knowing that the Master even of themselves was in heaven, and that respect of persons was not with him†." Under these awakening admonitions the lord and slave were mutually excited to affection—they were "beloved brothers‡." Confidence expelled restraint:—the yoke of servitude was lightened:—

* Ephesians, chap. 6. v. 8. † Ibid., chap. 6. v. 9.

‡ "No longer a slave only, but above a slave, a beloved brother."—Epistle to Philemon, ver. 16.

the exactions were mitigated:—the severities repressed:—the bonds were broken. That the merit of this achievement is the undivided triumph of our religion is a fact of history. Slavery was authorized by the laws of the old world; Constantine issued a decree that every slave who embraced Christianity should receive his immediate emancipation.—“As our Redeemer became incarnate,” said Gregory the Great, on emancipating his slaves, “to deliver us from the slavery of sin; so should we restore those to freedom who are constrained by the slavery of man.” Religion and liberty advanced with an equal progress; whenever the church received any donation of lands, the vassals of the soil were baptized and manumitted. The constant penance, which the Confessor imposed on the crimes of every wealthy peni-

tent, was the enfranchisement of his own slaves, and the redemption of the slaves of others*. In every Christian country the miseries of slavery have retreated before the Gospel, or contended in a yielding opposition against the zeal of its benevolence. Like Satan, it has been trodden down, under the foot of the Messiah; all evil things appear tenacious of existence; but, however protracted may be her expiring agonies, Slavery has received her death-blow; and that blow was given by one who gloried in the Cross of his Saviour, and was actuated by the motives, and argued on the principles, of Christianity.

* BURKE's *History of England*, p. 267, vol. x., octavo edit. of his Works. Thus while Europe was involved in ignorance and barbarism, Religion promoted the emancipation of slaves. MARIALPHUS states, "*Formularum*, lib. 1. c. 39.; lib. 2, c. 33, 34," that some liberated their slaves to obtain the favour of God, and that the Seik granted them their liberty for the pardon of their sins.

But while the great, directed by the spirit of the Gospel, have thus been encouraged to alleviate that weighty burthen of restraint, which had been accumulating, from the earliest ages, for the wretchedness of their dependants, as far as religion is effectual, they have given a stability and permanence to these privileges, and, by the instruction of the people, rendered themselves incapable of re-assuming the immunities which they have restored. It was required by their religion, as one of the indispensable obligations of their ascendancy, that they should promote the glory of the Almighty, by disseminating the knowledge of his word. They were to imitate the Saviour by delivering the Gospel to the poor. The multitude were to be instructed in the will of their God and their Redeemer that the empire of sin might be de-

stroyed, and the Almighty glorified in the obedience of his creatures ; and while the powerful assisted the advancement of these lofty purposes, by public institutions and endowments, they placed in the hands of their dependants the law by which the actions of the mightiest might be censured or approved ;—the inflexible ordinances, by which every instance of tyranny or oppression was condemned ;—the sacred covenant, which authorized the claims of the humble to freedom and to justice, to mercy and to protection.

Such have been the events which in every Christian country have, in various degrees, borne witness to the truth of the revelation, in the excellence of its results. “ Mankind owe to Christianity a political right, for which they can never be sufficiently grateful*.” But let us turn aside,

* MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*, lib. 24. c. 3.

from the enumeration of its general advantages, to trace the peculiar and immediate good, which we, as Englishmen, have derived from the propitious operations of the faith ; as it has acted on the hearts and minds of those admirable men who were occupied in the foundation and establishment of our national liberties.

That there should exist a constitution, like that of our country, uniting in itself the valuable properties of the three several forms of government which were common in the ancient world, was once regarded among those desirable things which were impossible to be achieved. In the ages which preceded the revelation of the Gospel, the scheme had been considered as one of those splendid speculations that might amuse the solitude of the contemplative, but which was infinitely too ethereal in its nature to be realized upon the

earth. It was cast aside among the dreams of the enthusiast, as a vision of unattainable felicity. It might be adapted for a world inhabited by a race of pure, intelligent, and passionless existences, but was wholly irreconcilable with the harsh and violent conditions of humanity. “Cunctas nationes et urbes populus, aut primores, aut singuli regunt, delecta ex his et consociata reipublicæ forma laudari facilius quam evenire, vel si evenit, haud diuturna esse potest*.” Such was the rational opinion of Tacitus.—The historian and the philosopher was fully justified in the judgment which he pronounced. It was evident to his research that nothing similar to such a state had ever flourished in the past; and it appeared equally evident, from the corruptions of the human heart, and the vicissitudes of human cir-

* TACITUS, *Ann.* iv. 33.

cumstances, that, if such a phenomenon ever should arise, among the incalculable accidents of futurity, it could obtain no permanent duration. He perceived that the interests of the three several portions of such a republic would be more frequently in collision than in union; that there would exist more causes of separation than points of contact; that its security must depend on their mutual opposition, not on their mutual amity; that however accurately the power might originally be distributed, the exactness of the equipoise could never be maintained; that the very delicacy of the balance would only render it more susceptible of fluctuation; that some momentary depression, in one of the parties, would inevitably offer an occasion for the encroachments of its rivals; that, at all events, some peculiar and nearer interests would

approximate the two, who would first unite for the deposition of the third, and then contest the monopoly, after they had defaced the symmetry, and levelled the proportions of the government.

That such would be the brief and turbulent existence of a mixt form of constitution, in the absence of those religious assurances, which moderate the passions of the combining parties, appeared indisputable to one of the most comprehensive understandings that ever dignified our nature. But it is useless to speculate on the durability of such a state. Tacitus saw this, and he dismisses the question in a single sentence,—“*Si evenit haud diuturna esse potest.*”—Without the operation of religion, without the interposition of some motives of action, independent of the passions, and superior to their influence, is it possible that a

government, like that of England, ever should receive its birth?—A government of so peculiar a character must be indebted for its origin to the forbearance of its founders. It must be designed and moulded by the hands of men possessing an entire ability to appropriate to themselves the undivided authority of the nation, and exalted, by some lofty principles of duty, above the insatiable and malignant tendencies of their avarice or their ambition. Invested with that unlimited command which is requisite for the reformation of abuse, and the establishment of right, they must be endowed with some sublime convictions which would persuade them contentedly to take their stand at the points of wisdom and of justice, and to resist every provocation to excess that might be suggested by the recollection of past injuries, or the tempta-

tions of personal aggrandizement. Such a moderation in the exercise of power, where its possessors had nothing but the suggestions of human nature to direct them, I may, with confidence, assert to be without example in the annals of mankind; and I appeal to the testimony of Hume himself,—a most unsuspecting and unwilling witness to any truth that may conduce to magnify the benefits of revelation,—in affirming that the salutary temperance, which distinguished the authors of our national liberty, was immediately derived from their faith in the Gospel. In those awful and important moments which have been so perilous in their aspect, and so blest in their issues; in those eventful moments of our history, when the unwilling subject has been compelled, in self-defence, to an honest violation of the duties of submission, it was

the religion of the Saviour, which interposed its venerated authority, to appoint the limits of the reclaimed dominion, and to prevent the just resistance of oppression, from assuming any of the disgraceful qualities of usurpation. When the Barons armed themselves for the deliverance of their country, and challenged from King John their own privileges and immunities, they voluntarily surrendered to their inferior vassals whatever rights they had themselves extorted from the tyranny and injustice of their monarch. This was a splendid sacrifice. They had drawn the sword, and they had conquered their ascendancy, and they gloriously employed their victory in the communication of the rights of freedom. “But,” says the historian, “what we are most to admire is the prudence and moderation of these haughty nobles, who were enraged by

injuries, inflamed by opposition, and elated by a total victory over their sovereign. They were contented, even in this plenitude of power, to depart from some articles of Henry the First's charter, which they made the foundation of their demands, and seem to have been sufficiently careful not to diminish too far the power and revenue of the crown*." Well might the infidel philosopher suffer his admiration to expatiate on this trait of generous forbearance. It corresponded with no maxims that could be deduced from his frigid and narrow theory of morals. He could calculate the force of passion, but he could not calculate the powers of faith; he could speculate on the violence of ambition, and he knew the impetuosity of vengeance and of wrath; but he was either incapable of estimating the coun-

* HUME's *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 94. Quarto edit.

teraction of Christian principles, or he had forgotten, that when those valiant men, who swayed the sword of their country, entered on the election of their leader, Fitz-Walter was not chosen to an earthly office, but to a sacred duty, as “Mareshal of the Holy Army of God and of the Church*.”

Another moment of vital importance to the constitution was the Revolution of 1688.—Again I turn to the authority of Hume—not to his *History*, but to his *Essays*—in asserting the obligations, for

* HUME'S *History*, vol. ii. p. 88. Had the Barons been guilty of any wrong, or had their King been a shade less dark in character, Hume would have taken care to remark this circumstance with sufficient vituperation. But, as they honourably fulfilled the solemn duty they had imposed upon themselves, no allusion is once made to the connexion that existed between their actions and the principles that directed them, though those principles were so unequivocally disclosed in the title of their leader. Compare the moderation of these half-barbarous nobles with the savage results of victory that disgraced the most polished ages of Greece and Rome.

which, at that momentous period, we were indebted to the benignant influence of our religion. If Christianity laid the foundation of our liberties, it has also existed as their security ; and the speculations of infidelity itself should teach us to unite at least in one universal petition to the Omnipotent—that the Gospel may never be abridged of its dominion. “ All human affairs,” says Hume, “ are governed by opinion ; now there has been a sudden and sensible change in the opinions of men by the progress of learning and liberty. Most people in this island have divested themselves of all superstitious reverence of names and authority. The clergy have lost their credit ; their pretensions and doctrines have been ridiculed, and even religion can scarcely support itself in the world*.” The conclu-

* *Essay on the British Constitution*.—Essay vii. Part 1.

sion that he derives from the contemplation of this unhallowed portrait,—which I trust was the vain reflection of his hopes, and not the express image of the truth,—is the approaching and convulsive death of the constitution. He looks back upon the past, and acknowledges, that without the direction of those sentiments which originate in the Gospel, our present equal and liberal form of government could never have survived the abdication of James the Second. “Had men been in the same disposition at the Revolution as they are at present, monarchy would have run a risk of being entirely lost in this country*.” The old heathen philosophy and the modern godless philosophy have a wonderful consistency in their conclusions. Hume authorizes the sentiment of Tacitus. The historian, who was unin-

* *Essay on the British Constitution*.—*Essay vii, Part 1.*

structed in the nature of Christianity*, is supported in the justice of his conclusions by the testimony of the historian who renounced it.—“Without religion,” says Hume, “the monarchy had been lost.”—“*Delecta ex his*,” says Tacitus, in his ignorance of the efficacy of religion, “*delecta ex his et consociata reipublicæ forma laudari facilius quam evenire†.*”

The parallel extends still farther. The great apostle of modern infidelity looks forward to the future, and, from the diminished influence of the Gospel, he derives his auguries of evil. The predictions which ungodliness pronounces for the inhabitants of this world, are correspondent with the misery which threatens its disciples in the next. The unholy prophet, the Balaam of irreligion, does

* Tacitus calls Christianity an execrable superstition.

† *Ann. lib. iv. 33.*

not discover to our hopes a single gleam of cheering anticipation. No oracles of joy proceed from the misty caverns of his atheism. The inscriptions on his sibyl leaves are legible to the eye, and intelligible to the understanding, but they are indeed most miserable in their import. After his tumultuous scenes of discord and aggression and civil war and slaughter, the brightest prospect that he reveals at the conclusion of his lengthening avenue of sorrow, is the passive subjection of the slave to the uncontrollable oppression of the tyrant. “ We shall at last find repose in an absolute monarchy, which it would have been better for us to have established peaceably from the beginning*.” On human principles that constitution, which is our most cherished and valuable inheritance as Englishmen, could never

* HUME's *Essays*, vii. Part 1.

have arisen into being, or, if it had arisen, could possess no stability or duration. It has no vital principle independent of religion, and every reflecting mind must agree with Hume and Tacitus, that on any other terms, “*si evenit haud diuturna esse potest* *.”

But to return to the general influence of Christianity on the political situation of mankind. Hume does not agree with Montesquieu in attributing the mildness of modern governments to the operations of the Gospel; he believes it to be the consequence of our improvement in knowledge †. Burke would divide the merit, and supposes that all the good which has

* TACITUS, *Ann.* iv. 33.

† Knowledge in the arts of government naturally begets mildness and moderation, by instructing men in the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity, which drive subjects into rebellion, and make the return to submission impracticable, by cutting off all hopes of pardon.

When

occurred “in this European world of ours, depended on two principles, and was indeed the result of both combined—the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion*.”—“The spirit of a gentleman” is, I presume, with the eloquent author of *Reflections on the French Revolution*, an equivalent for “the improved knowledge” of the philosophical essayist; and both may be comprehended in the general term of civilization. Christianity equally rejects the exclusive hypothesis of the one and the ungrateful compromise of the other. Supposing it were true, that civilization had been instrumental to the production of our political liberty, of

When the tempers of men are softened as well as their knowledge improved, this humanity appears still more conspicuous, and is the chief characteristic which distinguishes a civilized age from times of barbarity and ignorance.—HUME’s *Essay on Refinement in the Arts*.

* *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

our milder government, of our equal laws, of the gradual disruption of the bonds of slavery, the Gospel was the parent, the instructor, and the guide, to which that civilization is indebted for its birth and culture ; and the disciple of the Redeemer may be justly pardoned the resentment and indignation which he feels, when he hears the praises, that are due to his religion, unjustly lavished upon one of its accompaniments. The two things are inseparable. Throughout the whole of Christendom the faith has preceded as the cause ; intellectual improvement has followed as the consequence. Knowledge has advanced as the light of revelation was more visibly disclosed ; it has retreated as that light became obscured. Their progress has been equal. Their effects are so closely interwoven, that it is impossible for any human art to dis-

unite them. He who should attempt to separate the results of civilization from those of religion, must bring to the execution of the task a proficiency in the intricate anatomy of metaphysics, and a microscopic eye, and a hair-breadth delicacy of touch, which are denied to the most gifted of mankind; and he would find, when his difficult undertaking was accomplished, that the mote he had extracted was infinitely too small for the perception of our grosser organs.

Whatever cultivation and refinement human nature has received, has been communicated through the medium of its literature. It is by the means of books that the wise, of various nations and of distant ages, have given extent and permanency to their inquiries; and that the ignorance of one generation has been instructed by the experience of the gene-

ration that preceded it. With very few exceptions,—so few that they scarcely merit observation,—the whole circle of European literature acknowledged, till the beginning of the last century, no other principles of duty than the maxims of revelation; no other motives of conduct than the hope of its rewards, or the apprehension of its penalties. The greater portion of the works, in which the public mind was educated and refined, were wholly dedicated to the illustration of the truths, or the enforcement of the practice, of religion. Scarcely an author of enduring reputation had existed whose propositions were not supported by scriptural example and authority; whose pages were not sanctified by the pure and holy spirit of his devotion; and who did not continually recur to the ennobling and elevating recollections of the responsibility

and eternity of man. Religion was the predominating sentiment, from which the mightiest intellects derived their exaltation and their force. Christianity was the revered and the inseparable companion of the cautious researches of Bacon* ; it shared the daily contemplations of Locke† and Selden‡ and Boyle§ and

* Bacon's confession of faith is as fine a summary of the articles of a Christian's creed as could well be drawn up.

† Locke's opinion of revelation is too striking to be omitted.—“ It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.”—*Posthumous Works*.

‡ “ He was a resolved serious Christian,” says Sir Matthew Hale to Baxter, “ a great enemy to Hobbes's errors, and I have often seen him oppose Hobbes so earnestly as either to depart from him, or drive him out of the room.”—*Life of SELDEN*.

§ Many persons object to the trivial subjects of Boyle's reflections ; to me there is something peculiarly beautiful in the manner his devout and amiable mind reverts from the most trivial circumstance to his God and his Redeemer. The slight occasion of the pious meditation is an evidence of the permanency of the religious impression on his heart.

Clarendon* ; it occupied the gigantic minds of Pascal and of Hooker ; it was the inspiration of Milton† ; it gave the subject to Tasso and to Dante ; it was the theme of Taylor, of Bourdaloue, of Bossuet, and of Massillon‡ ; it was the motive to the investigations of Newton§.

* LORD CLARENDON'S *Essays* are as much founded on the principles, and supported by the authority, of the Gospel as the sermons of Tillotson.

† There was something very pardonable in the superstitious enthusiasm of Milton's widow, when she said, " that he stole from nobody, but that God's grace and the Holy Spirit visited him nightly."—SYMMONS' *Life of Milton*.

‡ It would be difficult to find a fifth name that would not suffer from a comparison with these Christian orators.

§ Newton says, in a private letter to Dr. Bentley—" When I wrote my treatise about our system, I had an eye upon such principles as might work with considerate men for the belief of a Deity, and nothing can rejoice me more than to find it useful for that purpose." There have been great men in the ranks of infidelity, but the minds of which all the faculties were most perfectly poised, and most justly proportioned, have indisputably been on the side of revelation.—If the question were to be decided by authority, who would hesitate between the testimonies of Bacon or Hume, Locke or Condorcet, Johnson or Bolingbroke, Selden or Hobbes

—By these illustrious men, and men like these, the continent of Europe was humanized and refined. The principles of the Gospel formed the universal system of philosophy. Virtue was everywhere applauded in the language of Scripture—vice was everywhere condemned in consistency with the judgments of revelation. Its morals pervaded the whole body of society. In the very theatres, the qualities of mercy, of benevolence, of chastity, of forgiveness—advanced upon religious grounds, and supported by religious inducements—were familiarized to the minds of those whose profligacy had

Newton or Diderot, Milton or Voltaire? In literature and in art, faith seems the constant attendant of the highest degree of perfection.—Madame de Staël revered Christianity; Lady Morgan does not.—Sir Joshua Reynolds was a sincere and a devout disciple of the Redeemer; the trumpet Kneller thought that, “if God had consulted him, he could have given Omniscience some lessons for the improvement of his creation.”

removed them from the schools of more severe and venerable instructors*. Even those solitary theorists who, misguided by some erratic meteor of the heart or the imagination, wandered farthest, in the dark midnight of their voluntary unbelief, from the home and safety of the Gospel, continued to profess an admiration for its purity, and recommended its perfect scheme of ethics to the adoption of their disciples. Whatever of improvement, therefore, the nations of Europe have derived from civilization is the immediate operation of religion. The civilization has been a religious civilization. To assert that the extended diffusion of knowledge would have had the

* In the works of Shakspeare, Corneille, Massinger, Ben Jonson, Racine, Beaumont and Fletcher, and others, we meet with the most beautiful expressions of the sentiments, and affecting illustrations of the virtues and the duties of the Gospel. Voltaire himself is Christian in his tragedies: the selfishness of atheism could afford no opportunity of pathos.

same ameliorating influence is an act of the most gross ingratitude. It is the invidious depreciation of an experienced minister of good for the exaltation of some untried competitor, who is raised to unmerited celebrity on the authority of his presumption, and the credit of his assertions. Philosophy could not have effected any thing which Christianity has not achieved. Rousseau does not hesitate to confess, that the success of religion has been infinitely superior to any which could have been anticipated as the consequence of mere human knowledge and cultivation*. At all events, the advocates for the omnipotence of civilization can only support the disputable pretensions of their idol by conjectures and specula-

* Par les principes, la philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien que la religion ne le fasse encore mieux, et la religion en fait beaucoup que la philosophie ne saurait faire.—*Emile*, tom. iii. p. 300.

tions and surmises. They have not been allowed the opportunity of experiment. Christianity had pre-occupied the affections and the understandings of mankind before the godless philosophy had re-awakened from its slumbers. But is it not probable, from the very circumstances of the case, that the author of the *Emile* was accurate in his judgment?—It certainly appears more credible, that the plain and simple and unequivocating lessons of the Messiah, delivered, as they were, with all the weight and dignity of a divine commission, and supported by the sanctions of an inevitable retribution; it certainly appears most credible, that these consecrated instruments would more effectually work to tame the savageness, and secure the harmony, of the world, than the inconclusive subtleties of a Hume, by whom we are instructed that

the boundaries of vice and virtue* are problematical, or the romances of a Voltaire, who would teach us, with a vicious apathy, to look on each as equally indifferent.

* "The bounds between the virtue and the vice cannot here (*i. e.*, in the case of luxury) be exactly fixed, more than in other moral subjects."—After thus leaving the landmarks of duty to be appointed at the discretion of the individual, the philosopher is kind enough to grant the voluptuary as liberal an indulgence of intemperance and crime as his passions could possibly require, by informing him, "that no gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious."—*Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

In the conclusion of his *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, he says, "Men still dispute concerning the foundation of their moral duties. When I reflect on this, I fall back into diffidence and scepticism, and suspect, that an hypothesis so obvious, had it been a true one, would long ere now have been received by the unanimous suffrage and consent of mankind."—We, as Christians, know that the solid basis of all moral duty is "the will of God"—the Gospel has mercifully instructed us in what that will consists—we may learn the value and necessity of the revelation, by finding, that though the wisest of the ungodly have had nearly six thousand years to arrange these matters for themselves, they have not yet laid the foundation of their duty, much less made any advances in raising the superstructure.

But granting for the sake of argument that civilization is capable of creating all those excellent effects, which are so liberally attributed to its influence, is it evident that the mighty agent would ever have had an existence, in the nations of modern Europe, without the aid and support of Christianity?—When all the splendid harvest of ancient poetry and philosophy and art lay at the feet of the barbarian conqueror, and subject to his ignorant disposal; but for the timely interposition of the Gospel might not the use of letters itself have been numbered among the *artes deperditæ*, and the inscriptions on the monuments of Italy have been as illegible to us as the hieroglyphics of Egypt? The relics of Greek and Roman literature were collected and preserved by the ministers of religion.—The cell of the monk was the cradle of

refinement and of learning. His remote and quiet habitation was the sacred ark where the memorials of the past were treasured, and where knowledge was sheltered in security, till Christianity had gradually subdued those darker and more ferocious passions which were extending their desolating deluge around the walls of his cloister. Literature was cultivated as subsidiary to religion*. The oracles

* "Christianity," says Burke, in his beautiful abridgment of our early history, "is such, that it almost necessitates an attention to many kinds of learning. For the Scripture is by no means an irrelative system of moral and divine truths, but it stands connected with so many histories, and with the laws, opinions, and manners of so many various sorts of people, and in such different times, that it is altogether impossible to arrive at any tolerable knowledge of it, without having recourse to much exterior inquiry. For which reason the progress of this religion has always been marked by that of letters."—Book ii. ch. 2. In this we may discover another of those merciful designs, which the Almighty has executed in rendering the knowledge of his word, a treasure to be diligently sought. The mind wanted some powerful motive to the pursuit of learning. He has given it in his volume of his oracles. But for this necessity all of Greek and Latin literature would have been lost.

of God presented a subject for the labours of the studious, and gave a character of eternal interest to his researches. The illustration of the sacred volume was to be sought in the histories of other nations, in the manners of distant climes, in languages which were gradually sinking into oblivion, or had, for ages, ceased to embody the imaginations of living men. "The curiosity of the clergy," says Gibbon, "was excited to read the original text, to understand the sacred liturgy of the church, and to examine in the writings of the fathers the chain of ecclesiastical tradition. These spiritual gifts were preserved in the Greek and Latin languages, which concealed the inestimable monuments of learning. The immortal productions of Virgil, of Cicero, and of Livy, which were accessible to the Christian barbarians, maintained a silent inter-

course between the reign of Augustus and the times of Clovis and Charlemagne*.”—But, if we are indirectly indebted to revelation for the safety of these venerable remnants of the wisdom of antiquity which still exist to us, it was by its immediate influence that the advantages of these possessions were disseminated among the people†. The

* GIBBON’S *Decline and Fall*, ch. 37.

† The purposes proposed by Benedict in the foundation of his order were, “the conversion of Europe to Christianity—the cultivation of her deserts—the revival of learning.” None of these points were neglected by the Benedictines while any thing remained for them to do. In this country, the rapidity with which the Gospel was extended by Augustine and his companions, and the immediate improvement in civilization that accompanied its progress, would be rejected as incredible, if they were not so distinctly parts of its history.—Not indeed of Hume’s history, for there Christianity never appears to have any other operation than to infatuate a bigot, or kindle the fires of persecution. But any man, who looks fairly at the early ages of our country, will find our religion so intimately interwoven with all moral, political, and literary advancement, as to render it impossible to deny that the Gospel was the cause, and these advantages the re-

Benedictine, when he assumed the vows that bound him to the instruction of the heathen, and to the cultivation of the deserts of Europe, at the same time solemnly engaged himself to assist in the revival of its learning. His monastery was raised in situations that were most desolate and wild and barren; and, while

sults. "The fruits and effects of the mission of Augustine," says Collier, "were striking. A people, hitherto savage, barbarous, and immoral, was changed into a nation mild, benevolent, humane and holy."—"Every thing brightened as if nature had been melted down and re-coined."—See COLLIER'S *Ecclesiastical History*, Preface—LINGARD'S *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, and BURKE'S *History of England*, Book ii. ch. 1, 2.—It is true the monasteries became useless, but they were rendered useless by the exertions of their inhabitants. They became rich, and in some respects those riches were abused; but there never existed any proprietors of wealth who so liberally shared it with the poor as the inhabitants of the religious houses. While these existed England required no poor laws. To a very large portion of that wealth, by which the poor were so benefited, and of which the church was deprived, it could plead the claim on which all right of property is founded—the claim of original cultivation by the hands of its servants.

the labour of his hand subdued the wilderness to the service of mankind, the young fertility which bloomed around his dwelling was but the emblem of that superior moral culture of which it was the source and centre. In times of violence the servants of the Gospel were the only depositaries of learning ; in times of tranquillity and peace they were the willing ministers of its communication*. Not

* Many devoted themselves to the education of the poor. " The regular ecclesiastics of the religious foundations undertook, out of charity, to teach the lower classes reading, writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping. They likewise taught not only rhetoric, and the Greek and Latin languages, but in towns they kept schools of philosophy and theology, scholastic and moral, mathematics, geometry and fortification.—HELYOT, tom. iv. p. 307., quoted by Chateaubriand.

" That the monasteries were the best schools of education is a fact universally admitted. History scarcely mentions a person of either sex, without mentioning, at the same time, the monastery in which that individual was educated. Neither was this education confined to the nobles or to the wealthy. The children of their tenants, and the very poorest of the poor, were there instructed in religion and morality. A school was as regular an appendage to a monastery as a

contented with their own exertions, they claimed the co-operation of the rich ; they proved, on the authority of Heaven, that charity was his most important occupation ; and that to aid the march of intellect was one of the loftiest occupations of charity. Under the influence of this persuasion, national learning followed as the inseparable consequence of national conversion. The places of education multiplied. The wide extent of civilized Europe contains not a single university that was not founded by some royal, or

church." Dr. Robertson (*History of Charles V.*, vol. 1. p. 19, and note xi., 4to) attempts to stigmatize the instruction which was thus charitably afforded, on the authority of a passage taken from the remains of Elegius, bishop of Noyon. If the historian was not himself guilty of garbling the words of this prelate, he was most basely deceived ; for the whole passage is a perfect refutation of his extract.—It describes the character of a true disciple of the Gospel, and conveys a lesson of as pure morality, and sound Christian truth, as can possibly be delivered.—See BUTLER *on the English and Irish Catholics*, vol. 1. p. 69.

noble, or affluent disciple of the Redeemer, in compliance with a religious sense of duty*. When literature directs its force against the Gospel it raises the arm of a parricide, and strikes at the heart of a parent, to whom it is indebted for its existence and protection; for its most splendid instances and its purest arguments; for its inspiration of high thoughts, and for its treasure of uncontaminated sentiment.

Whatever advantages then have been wrought by civilization, have been wrought through the medium of Christianity; but independent of its connexion with religion, has civilization the power of pro-

* Chateaubriand says that all the European universities and schools, without exception, were founded by religious princes, or by bishops and churchmen. Book vi. c. 5.—It appears that he is correct. See also FLEURY's *Histoire Ecclesiastique*, tom. x. p. 24. For the services which in this country the clergy have rendered to the cause of learning, see SHUTTLEWORTH's volume on the *Church and Clergy*.

ducing those admirable effects which are so generously classed among its consequences? "Learning," says Montesquieu, "renders men mild and and amiable*." It ought perhaps to be attended with this result; but neither the records of nations, or of individuals, bear witness to any necessary union between science and benevolence, arts and gentleness.

Hume has told us that humanity is indissolubly linked with industry and knowledge, and that it is peculiar to the more polished and luxurious ages of the world†, —but this opinion is not authorized by reason, or supported by experience.—St. Paul, describing the manners of the Roman empire in the period of its highest refinement and cultivation, names the want of natural affection‡ among the hi-

* *Les Connaissances rendent les hommes doux.*

† *Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

‡ Romans, ch. i. v. 31.

deous catalogue of its abominations. His description is authenticated by the testimony of every author who has diligently investigated the manners of the age in which he wrote. In the centre of those advantages, which are supposed to soften the affections, and to moderate the passions, the Romans became alienated even from that instinctive sentiment of tenderness and compassion, which is among the universal characteristics of our race. So far from being humanized by the perfection of their mechanical skill, and the extension of their knowledge, these very things appear to have wrought their moral degradation. The consequence is not extraordinary. It was as naturally engendered by their excessive luxury, as the poison of the serpent by the sultriness of the summer's sun. As industry conduces to the improvement of those arts

which smooth the couch of dissipation, and pamper the caprice of appetite ; selfishness is fostered and the heart hardened in the same proportion as the manners are effeminated. The passions that are engendered in the rank soil of luxury and indolence are avarice and sensuality ; and these are cold and obdurate of nature, cowardly and cruel, studious of their own, and oblivious of the claims of others. The Saviour of the world never exhibited more forcibly his perfect knowledge of the inward workings of the heart, that he had himself created, than when he described the miserable Lazarus, exposed, without pity or relief, at the gate of him who “ was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day*.” This tenderness of compassion is unknown to those who circulate in those

* Luke, ch. xvi. v. 19, 20.

flowery passages of existence, from which all asperities are studiously removed. They who dwell amid the show, the softness and the accommodation of highly-cultivated and artificial society, instead of vaunting the disinterested kindness of their companions, weary us with their perpetual cry of lamentation over the forgetfulness and the inconstancy, the ingratitude and the heartlessness, of their associates. The love of ease and the dread of inconvenience, which are created by a minute attention to personal indulgence, supersede the claims of the affections, and subdue the impulses of compassion. The emotions of involuntary pity become extinct in the tainted atmosphere and the perfumed chambers of luxury, as the natural life inhales contagion from the balmy air and the beautiful serenity of a Roman spring.

It is asserted that the connexion between humanity and knowledge is demonstrated by experience; but from what region of the world is this experience to be derived? Were the Romans more mild in their manners,—were fewer children exposed by their parents to perish in helpless infancy,—were their slaves more leniently treated,—was victory attended with more instances of clemency,—were the numbers on the proscription lists diminished,—were the gladiatorial shows less frequent or less sanguinary, after Marcellus had enriched the city with the curiosities of Greece, and inspired his countrymen with their first perception of the beautiful, than when Fabius disdained the spoil of statues and of pictures, and indignantly abandoned to the Tarentines the images of their conquered

and their angry divinities * ? If humanity originates in knowledge, the truth of the proposition should be testified in the conduct of individuals. Those princes and commanders who have been most celebrated for literary acquirements, should also have been most illustrious for their gentle distribution of authority. The author of the Commentaries ought not to have been the murderer of Cato's senate at Utica †. Cicero should not have doubted whether there was any cruelty in the murdering of slaves by hundreds, at the public spectacles, for the amusement of his civilized and polished and

* Marcellus adorned the city with curiosities in the Grecian taste. Fabius Maximus, when he took Tarentum, brought nothing of this kind away: but said, "Let us leave the Tarentines their angry deities: Marcellus was blamed at Rome, by the severe citizens, for having given occasion to to idleness, to vain discourse, and luxury."—PLUTARCH'S *Marcellus*.

† *Appian. de Bel. Civ. lib. 2.*

luxurious countrymen*. The elder Dionysius, who experienced more delight at obtaining the prize of poetry at Athens, than in all his preceding victories ; and his son, who died with the excess of joy on hearing that his tragedy had succeeded, ought to have been recorded as the protectors, and not detested as the tyrants, of Syracuse. On the principle of a necessary union between knowledge and gentleness of heart, Nero should have been renowned as the mildest of emperors ; he was a person of infinite accomplishment ; he was an orator, a poet, a dancer, and a musician ; he was so delicately alive to the sentiment of art, that he set fire to his metropolis for the purpose of delighting his imperial admiration of the sublime, by singing the destruction of Troy amid a scene of corre-

* *Tusculanae Disputationes*, lib. ii. 16.

spondent horror ;—but thus pre-eminently polished as he was, it yet remains for the historian to discover “ the indissoluble chain” which united his luxury and refinement with any demonstrations of humanity.—These examples are drawn from ancient times, when it may be said, that “ the practice of domestic slavery naturally produced a ferociousness of manners, and rendered every man of rank a petty tyrant*.” But if civilization is so inseparably connected with the mild affections, as we are instructed to believe, why did it not moderate this authority ? Why did it suffer the continuance of those bonds, which must have so cruelly outraged its accompanying tenderness of nature ? Why did the effective principle of good so extensively prevail, without any effort to annihilate the counteracting

* HUME'S *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*.

principle of evil ?—But I am wrong.—I have mistaken the meaning of the infidel humanity ; the word has its religious and its irreligious appreciation. In its infidel interpretation, perhaps, learning and refinement may propagate humanity. The philosophic virtue has no relation to Christian benevolence. Its very admiration of excellence is exaggerated into a vice, and it hates sin so much, that it loves man too little. It bears kindred with the cruelty of the despot, and not with the charity of the Christian. “ Who,” exclaims Hume, “ can read the accounts of the amphitheatrical entertainments without horror ! one’s HUMANITY is apt to renew the barbarous wish of Caligula, that the people had but one neck ; a man could almost be pleased, by a single blow, to put an end to such a race of monsters *.”

* HUME’s *Essays*, Note U. Vol. I.

—I do not deny to civilization the merit of its union with a HUMANITY which can meditate, with complacency, on the idea of depopulating the metropolis of nations at a blow ; and which sees nothing but a race of criminals to be condemned and slaughtered, where the love of the Gospel would discover the occasion of mercy, and souls to be redeemed, and sinners to be converted.

If I am opposed by Hume, I am supported by Rousseau, in asserting that the comparative mildness of modern governments has not been the consequence of their civilization. “ A purer faith,” says the author of the *Emile*, “ has given a greater gentleness to Christian manners. This improvement is not the work of literature ; for wherever it has previously flourished, humanity has not been the more respected by its means ; the cruelties of

the Athenians, of the Egyptians, of the Roman emperors, of the Chinese, are the examples of this truth*.” Had a few more years of life been granted to him, he need not thus have sought, in the annals of the past, or in the descriptions of more distant regions of the earth, for the authorities that might substantiate his assertions. The sorrows of apostate France might have delivered to him the tremendous confirmation of his words. In the triumph and operations of that infidel

* Nos Gouvernemens modernes doivent incontestablement au Christianisme leur solide autorité, et leurs révolutions moins fréquentes; il les a rendues eux-mêmes moins sanguinaires : cela se prouve par le fait, en les comparant aux Gouvernemens anciens. La religion, mieux connue, écartant le fanatisme, a donnée plus de douceur aux mœurs Chrétiennes le changement n'est point l'ouvrage des lettres; car partout où elles ont brillé, l'humanité n'en a pas été plus respectée : les cruautés des Athéniens, des Egyptiens, des Empereurs de Rome, des Chinois, en font foi. Que d'œuvres de miséricorde sont l'ouvrage de l'Evangile !—*Emile*, tom. iii. p. 199.

philosophy, which he had so eloquently assisted and reproached, he might have been instructed to estimate, with justice, the worth of that benevolent revelation, which, in his writings, he had persecuted and praised. When God and Christ were banished from their temples, and impure objects of adoration were exposed upon their altars ; when the Apostles were denounced, and Voltaire was canonized ; when the Christian monarch was disgraced, defamed, and murdered ; when the godless usurpers of his power, each stimulating the cruelty of the other, desired by a single blow to annihilate their foes, and that “even the very ashes of their enemies might be rooted from the land* ;” when the Loire was impeded in its course by the drowned bodies of the ministers

* Fouché to Collot d'Herbois. *Moniteur*, Dec. 24, 1793.

of Christ*, and the silence of the midnight ocean was disturbed by the cries of the expiring victims† of revolution; when children‡ were sentenced for the faith and the loyalty of their parents; and they, whose infancy had sheltered them from the fire of the soldiery, were bayonnetted as they clung about the knees of their destroyers; when the slaughter of hundreds§ was the celebration of victory, and the ordinary modes of trial and of execution were proscribed, as processes too dilatory for the impatient avidity of carnage; when suspicion was proof, and invention was exhausted to facilitate the despatch of

* Several hundreds were destroyed in the Loire.

† The Noyades, who suffered by an invention of Carriere's.

‡ This alludes to the bloody sacrifice of 500 children, made by the orders of Carriere.

§ "We have only one way of celebrating victory, we send this evening 213 rebels to be shot."—Fouché to Collot d'Herbois.

the condemned* ; when, in the National Convention, the pretended defenders of the people demanded their victims from among the people by hundreds of thousands† ; when such enormities were practised and defended and applauded by men who gloried in their systematical ungodliness,—by persons as refined as mere civilization could render them,—by writers of plays, and makers of speeches, and painters of pictures, and authors of moral essays, and metaphysical disquisitions ; when these were the acts of those self-denominated philosophers—who, professing the most boundless philanthropy for the whole human race, were possessed by the most merciless ferocity against every individual of the species—then it was

* Just before the death of Robespierre a guillotine was invented to execute eight at a time.

† Marat in the National Convention called for 270,000 heads.

that Rousseau's eulogium on the benignant tendency of the Gospel to moderate the excesses of the powerful was most terribly illustrated, and most awfully confirmed. It then no longer remained to be disputed whether "philosophy, upon the throne, would be the master of its passions, and manifest in the benevolence of its command that 'douce humanité,' which it had vaunted in its humbleness and its retirement*." "God has never left himself without a witness†" In these latter days we have received the present and visible demonstration of the vice of infidelity in the abominations of its votaries. We have learnt to appreciate the worth of Chris-

* "Reste à savoir si la philosophie, à son aise et sur le trône, commanderait bien à la gloriole, à l'intérêt, à l'ambition, aux petites passions de l'homme, et si elle pratiquerait cette humanité si douce qu'elle nous vante la plume à la main."—ROUSSEAU'S *Emile*.

† Acts, ch. xiv. v. 17.

tianity, as we have trembled at the consequences of its abolition.—To the rulers of a mighty nation Atheism was religion, and reason the corrupted idol that they set up for the adoration of the people, That reign of Atheism and of reason was the reign of terror. So appalling was the dominion of these evil powers, that they who had invoked the spirits, and had tasked their energies, were intimidated at the spectacle of ruin: they shuddered at the presence of the extensive havoc which had been so ruthlessly designed: they were struck with a sudden panic, as society, like a dying man, appeared to lie in its last desperate and convulsive agonies before them: they hastily commenced the work of resuscitation: they strove to heal the wounds they had inflicted; and their first effort, to awaken the departing spirit into life, was to renounce their an-

nihilating creed ; to proclaim a religious festival* ; to confess that there is a God above us, and that man is born for immortality.

* Fête de Dieu, proclaimed by Robespierre himself.

CHAPTER I.

Sect. III.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
HAPPINESS OF THE POOR BY THEIR OPE-
RATION ON THE RICH.

THERE can be no doubt of the benefit derived to the large body of society by the dissolution of those bonds which linked the slave to the passions and caprices of his master. Human nature itself is aggrandized by such an emancipation. But still there are situations and accidents in life under which individuals, in the labouring classes of society, would find their freedom by no means an unmitigated good. In a state of slavery the poor were united, in the hour of sick-

ness or distress, to a natural protector, who would be induced, by his personal interest in their welfare, to provide for their relief. A deliverance from this alliance, if it has freed the poor from the misery of permanent subjection, has also freed the rich from the obligation of permanent support. The passage in which Necker argues this point, and places the bane and the antidote before our view, is so impressive, that I cannot forbear translating it.

* “The empire of the higher classes of society over their inferiors,” says that admirable man, “is now more entire and independent than ever. They are no longer bound to any continued protection towards those whose services they may demand. The appetites and the caprice of those favourites of fortune decide the

* NECKER *sur la Religion*, ch. xvii.

period of their connexion with the man whose only patrimony consists of his time and of his strength ; and as soon as that connexion is interrupted, the poor, absolutely separated from the rich, is abandoned to encounter all the distressing hazards of his destiny. He must again hasten to offer the labour of his hand to the dispensers of subsistence ; he must expose himself to their refusal ; he must frequently, in every year, experience all the distress occasioned by the fluctuation of his resources. Without doubt, when such a state of things was established by the support of law, it was presumed that, amid the multiplied relations of social life, there would exist a kind of balance and equality between the necessity, which compels the labourer to request employment, and the desires by which the rich are induced to accept his services. But

this equipoise, so essentially necessary, can never be exactly and constantly established, since it must ever be the result of a fortuitous concurrence of accidents, and the uncertain effect of an infinite multitude of operations, no one of which is submitted to any positive control. Still, when to maintain the security of property it was found necessary to leave the fate of the greater number of mankind to the chances of fortune, or to intrust their support to simple probabilities, it was indispensable to find some salutary expedient which might regulate the free exercise of the rights of property. That happy and ameliorating power could only be discovered in an obligation to benevolence imposed by the divine will, and in a spirit of charity universally diffused among mankind. Such sentiments and such duties, the last resource afforded to

the unfortunate, could alone repair the evils of a system, by which the condition of the majority of a nation is made to depend on the fortuitous and doubtful agreement of the convenience of the rich, with the necessities of the poor.—Yes :—without that succour, without the intervention of the most estimable of virtues, the multitude might justly have complained of those social institutions which, as the price of their independence, intrusted their subsistence to the capricious protection of their superiors. And thus it is,” concludes Necker, “ that charity, which is venerable under so many points of view, has become the intelligent and political principle which serves to amalgamate the liberty of the individual with the necessary but imperious laws of property.”

These are not the opinions of a specu-

lative student. They are the words of one who had been actively employed in the most important trusts and occupations. He says, that “the only expedient which could repair the ills arising from the inequalities of life must be derived from an obligation to benevolence imposed by the divine will.” From what other source could this alleviating influence be derived?—No natural suggestions of the human heart would have directed it. Witness the experience of all antiquity and the state of total abandonment to which the afflicted were consigned. We do not read in the records of ancient Greece or Rome, though we are sufficiently conversant with their *pistrinæ* and their *ergastula*, of the existence of a single charitable asylum.—The heart inherits its natural impulses of compassion; but they quickly perish in the absence of religious excitement and

cultivation; their interposition is resented as importunate by the vehemence of the unregenerated soul ; they are rejected as officious adversaries to the speculations of self-love, and all the maxims, as well as all the customs of antiquity, were designed for their destruction rather than their encouragement. Pity was a feeling to be doubted and subdued ; hatred or ambition, lust or vengeance, were consecrated by the praises of their poets and their historians, and were honourable in the schemes of their philosophy ; but the only mild emotion that pleaded against their violence, and reported to our deteriorated nature the perfection of its origin, was denounced by the corruption of the heart, and, like the Saviour of the world in the assembly of the malignant, was detested for its innocence, and persecuted for its purity. With

Cicero*, compassion was a property of the weak; with Seneca, it was a characteristic of the base†. Virgil‡ and Marcus Aurelius reverse the instructions of Jesus, and describe it as a part of wisdom to be impenetrable to the sorrows of the poor. Even Epictetus, who, as a fellow-sufferer in the wrongs of slavery, should have learnt some lessons of tenderness for the miserable in the rigid school of personal affliction, scarcely ever mentions the sentiment of humanity, but to admonish his disciples against yielding to its impressions.

The influence of instinctive pity is of itself weak and transient. We are so continually recalled to those nearer interests, which are important to ourselves, that, unless some convictions of religion

* *Tus. Dis.* lib. iv.

† *De Clem.* lib. xi.

‡ *Georgics*, Book II. p. 499.

connect our destiny with that of the unhappy, the remembrance of their affliction, and the desire of relieving it, is seldom more enduring than the actual presence of the object by which the emotion was awakened. All the efforts of mere human instruction had been directed to abridge and to confine the sphere even of this limited dominion. Till compassion was hallowed by the approbation of the Messiah, the wretched had nothing of protection or support to expect from the voluntary sympathy of the affluent. With the heathen prosperity was an evidence of the favour of the Deity ; and he who was scorned by fortune was avoided by mankind*.

But though the poor would be excluded by the affections of the heart from any

* *Fatis accede, Deisque*

Et cole felices, miseros fuge.—*Lucan* viii. l. 486.

participation in the comforts of the wealthy, perhaps the law might interpose to amend the obdurances of nature, and enforce the alms that compassion had refused. In some moment of public apprehension a portion of their right of property might be extorted from the rich, and they might render their possessions chargeable for the provision of the destitute.—Would such an ordinance have been effectual? Not to speak of the injustice with which it would operate upon the higher classes of society; of the tyranny which would thus bereave them of the honest emoluments of their prudence or their exertions; of the folly which, to secure an occasional resource for the unfortunate, would render the attainments of industry responsible for the deficiencies of sloth;—would such an institution be productive of advantage

even to those whom it was intended to assist?

On this head we may speak from experience. What Christ delivered as a precept to his disciples, as a test of their faith, and an evidence of their religious love, we have exaggerated into a legal ordinance; and we have felt the evil of mingling any thing of human invention with the perfect suggestions of the Holy Spirit. We have a legal provision for the necessitous. With us the sacrifice was voluntarily made from principles of Christian duty, and in a devout and a sincere, though a mistaken, intention of obedience to the recorded will of the Creator:—with us, therefore, the affluent do not complain of any injustice or severity in the enactment; for, though no human power could with propriety have interfered to compel their charities and

constrain their munificence, they acknowledge that the Deity possesses a legitimate authority over the distribution of his gifts. The rich, therefore, are sufficiently content with the institution ; but what has been its effects upon the poor themselves ?—It has anticipated the influence of the natural affections, and acted as a check upon the moral virtues of the people. It has converted the honest accumulations of the prudent into the granaries of the negligent. It has, for the lower orders, dispensed with the necessity of all consideration for the future, by constantly presenting to their contemplation, after the wasted youth, and the inconsiderate marriage, and the dissolute manhood, the certain prospect of a legal refuge for their age. It has operated in the manner diametrically contrary to that in which it was designed, and promoted

and increased the poverty that it was intended to obviate.—“ The only expedient which can repair the ills arising from the inequalities of life must be derived from an obligation to benevolence imposed by the Divine will.” There is a double imperfection in every other system of relief. Every scheme of compulsory alms must be defective, not only in its means of alleviation—which can only be temporary and pecuniary—but it can admit of no moral discrimination. It can take cognizance of the present necessity, but it cannot distinguish between the afflictions which are the innocent results of remote and incalculable contingencies, and the distress which originates in vice, and which only encounters in privation the punishment eternally designed to it by the providence of God. For this imperfection there is no remedy. Any

discretionary power vested in the agents of public charity to estimate the moral qualities of the applicants, and apportion the relative assistance, would rather increase than remedy the evil by the introduction of infinite partiality and prejudice. No:—charity is too subtile and ethereal in its nature to bear the constraints of any human legislation. If you attempt to encumber it with the fetters of the earth, “it springs upon the viewless winds to heaven again.” To be really beneficial to mankind it must flow from its own source, which is faith in the Redeemer; it must be supported by its own incitements, which are the hopes of participating in the promises, and the fear of sharing in the penalties of the final resurrection. I grant that, under the direction of these impulses and these motives, the relief to the distressed would

be precarious :—it may sound hard, but it ought to be precarious. There ought to be the liability to failure. “The giving mankind a dependance on any thing for support in age or sickness,” says Franklin*, “besides industry and frugality during health, tends to flatter our natural indolence, to encourage idleness and prodigality, and thereby promote and increase poverty, the very evil it was intended to cure.” The insecurity of assistance in distress is the nurse of prudence, of moral restraint, of virtuous industry, of regard to reputation, of deference to superiors, in the subordinate classes of society.—The alms of the charitable never ought to be calculated upon as a part of the applicable property of the poor, but to be received as an unhopèd-for succour to the desolate, for which God is to be

* *Essay on the Labouring Poor.*

thanked, and the hand that ministers them regarded as the active instrument of his benevolence.

While the constrained assistance has a demoralizing effect upon the people, the liberal alms which are distributed from the spirit of Christian charity would exist among the poor as the visible testimony of the truth and power of the Gospel. In a religious sense there is the greatest difference between the scanty dole of the parish officer and the various succour which is entreated by the love of Jesus, and piously conceded in reverence of his name.

Nor is there any fear lest the supply should be more inadequate to the end, than would be necessary to punish waste and to make imprudence fearful, and to render indolence abhorred. We cannot in our present circumstances entertain

even a probable conjecture respecting the abundance and the efficacy of that relief, which might be afforded to the poor, by the unconstrained benevolence of their Christian brethren. Without our present institutions there would be a smaller number of necessitous, for one immediate tendency of a legal provision is to act as a premium upon wretchedness, and foster the increase of want. With fewer claimants there would be a more generous supply; for another immediate effect of a certain legal provision for the poor is the exhaustion of the springs of voluntary pity. There is not a single individual, however deeply he may be impressed with the sacred truths of revelation, or penetrated with the affections of the Gospel, but feels that the sight of sorrow is answered in his heart by a far weaker sympathy than if there were no such institu-

tions in existence. It ought not to be so—but so it is. The poor laws remove the miserable from our personal protection; they separate him from our proper and especial guardianship. We provide for the national stock of calamity in the mass, and with this contribution we satisfy the conscience, and persuade ourselves that we have a less immediate concern in the individual instances of affliction. When the wretch lies before our path in the extremity of squalidness and want, he no longer appears to address himself to our compassion with all the rights of sorrow and all the sacred claims of Christianity. Occupied with nearer interests, we no longer acknowledge the criminality of rejecting the example of the Samaritan*, but pass onward with the Priest and Levite of the

* St. Luke, ch. x. v. 30.

parable, and abandon him to his destiny, while we excuse ourselves before the tribunal of the heart, by the recollection of his authorized protectors, and of the distant home where the proper application may secure to him a relief.

But, in defiance of these impediments which exist to counteract the demands of our religion, we still perceive that the power of the Gospel is invincible; that impaired, though not subdued, by the incumbrances of human ordinances, it is still abundant in efforts of charity; and we may conceive how sufficient its energies would be, in their unconstrained and unabridged ability, by the munificence with which the claims of every more extensive and more severe calamity is answered; by the splendour of our public hospitals and institutions; by the wealth expended in national education, and in

propagating the lessons of everlasting truth ; by the active benevolence of thousands among the retired and obedient disciples of the Saviour, who, “ possessing themselves in quietness,” are conscious of no sorrow that does not spring from sympathy with another’s wo, and whose dearest joys are found in administering to his necessities. “ The poor ye have always with you*,” said the Redeemer of mankind,—they exist upon the earth as the representatives of Christ. We read in the sacred record of his word, that the communion between the afflicted and their Redeemer is so inseparably interwoven, that every act of liberality to them will be rewarded as performed towards himself; and while Christianity is prevalent upon the earth, and charity is exalted to our religious veneration as

* St. Matthew, ch. xxvi. v. 11.

the most valuable sacrifice that the obedient can present before the throne of the Creator, and as the only human atonement* for the past transgressions of the penitent, there will continue to exist two abundant sources of benevolence from which affliction may derive the waters of consolation. If the munificence of piety should fail, there is another motive as certain and as permanent as the corrup-

* “ Alms and fastings are the wings of prayer, and make it pierce the clouds ; that is, humility and charity are the best advantages and sanctification of our desires to God.” This was the counsel of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, “ Elce-mosynis peccata tua redime :” Redeem thy sins by alms, so the Vulgar Latin reads it ; not that money can be the price of a soul, for “ we are not redeemed with silver and gold ;” but that the charity of alms is that which God delights in, and accepts as done to himself, and procures his pardon according to the words of Solomon ; “ In truth and mercy iniquity is pardoned ;” that is, in the confession and alms of a penitent there is pardon ; “ for water will quench a flaming fire, and alms make an atonement for sin ;” this is that love which, as St. Peter expresses it, “ hideth a multitude of sins.”—Bishop TAYLOR—*Doctrine and Practice of Repentance*, c. x. §. 6.

tion of our nature, which will extort the alms from the terrors of the conscience.

If the humbler classes of mankind have any consideration for their worldly happiness, never will they suffer the name of Jesus to be blasphemed. The lower the place we fill in the gradation of society, by so much the greater is our interest in the preservation of the faith. To the poor Christianity is their sole inheritance of good. It is the bright patrimony which God has given them, and by which he has exalted their temporal inferiority, and bestowed a religious equality on the conditions of existence. As the poor are subjects, it is their security for political freedom; as they are dependants, it is their protection against private tyranny; as they are necessitous, it is their claim on sympathy, and their hope for succour. The hour in which the Gospel fails will

be the miserable hour, when the passions, which it has weakened or expelled, will re-establish their savage domination ; in which pride and selfishness, and lust and rapine, will re-ascend our thrones, and usurp our judgment-seats, and revel in our palaces, and extend over our fading fields and our depopulated cities the iron rule and the torturing power of their oppression ; till, in the utter wretchedness of this mortal being, we shall even languish for that dark repose and mute annihilation of the grave, which is the only refuge that infidelity can offer to despair.

CHAPTER I.

Sect. IV.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
HAPPINESS OF THE SUPERIOR, BY THEIR
OPERATION ON THE DEPENDANT, CLASSES
OF SOCIETY.

IF there were found a family in which the due respect for the parent and the master was forgotten; in which the unprofitable day was spent in contested pretensions to authority, and obstinate resistance of command; in which every endeavour to establish a directing influence should be frustrated, by impious children and rebellious domestics; in which the individuals, without reference to their common welfare and security,

should separately pursue the violent bent of their inclinations, and make a wilful spoil of the decent accommodations of their home, and, contrary to every design of order and of peace, only join in unanimity of opposition:—if there were found a family so forgetful of its natural duties, and so blind to its general advantages, we might trace, in its brief career of tumult, and in its end of inevitable ruin, the imperfect emblem of the wretchedness and desolation, which would follow the severing of those ties, by which the different classes of society are connected.

That rule and submission are indispensable to the happiness of mankind few have had the temerity to dispute; but it is one thing to acknowledge their necessity, and another to establish them as principles of right and duty. There is an imperfection in every thing of human

origin or human arrangement. Much of the corruption of our nature ever mingles even with our best designs and with our wisest efforts ; and it is the peculiar character of our social institutions that their evil bears, with all the oppression of its weight, where their good is least immediately perceptible. The excellence of those regular degrees of authority and subjection, which pervade civil society, is very distinctly visible to those who are enjoying its immunities, in the security of their property, in the obedience that waits on their desires, and in the rapid execution of their purposes ; to them, exercised as they are in exalted trusts, and appointed to splendid but invidious offices, and abounding in those things which excite the malignant passions of the multitude, the inviolability of the laws and ordinances is inseparably connected with the

welfare and the tranquillity of their existence. They experience the convenience, and they acknowledge the wisdom, of those enactments which intrust the rank of the powerful, and the possessions of the affluent, to the severe protection of the law. But the wisdom of such a system is by no means so self-evident to the many. The meditative mind may trace its kindly influence from the heart to the extremities of society, and discover, that, as there is no part uncherished by the vigour and the support which it diffuses, neither is there any part, however abject or remote, that would not be injured by its abolition. This is a truth; but it is an obscure truth. The advantages which result from the fair gradations of rule and of obedience, approach the labouring classes through such circuitous and complicated channels, that it requires an edu-

cated attention to follow them in their windings, and to track them to their source. Doubtless the poor would be sufferers in the miseries of anarchy ;—doubtless the poor participate in the advantages of government ; but the portion of good which circulates to them so coldly cheers the narrowness of their homes, that they deserve the pardon, and not the punishment, of their superiors, if they fail to comprehend in what manner their interest is involved in the quiet subsistence of institutions, which secure to their masters the liberty and the command and the appropriated wealth of nature ; and which yield nothing to themselves but the oppressive residue of constraints and labours and exclusions.—“ *Malesuada*” has ever been considered as one of the most appropriate epithets of poverty, and discontent is the evil lesson that she incul-

cates in the hourly sense of personal privation, and in the tantalizing perception of the superfluities of others. In opposition to such powerful and constant arguments it would be difficult—nay, it would be impossible—to produce on the minds of the lower orders of society any permanent conviction of the benefit which they derive from the regulations of civil life; and, unless such a conviction can be produced, it would be in vain, on any human grounds, to assert a claim to their submission.

There was a time in which men yielded their ignorant obedience to their superiors, “without any inquiry about its origin or its cause, any more than about the principle of gravity or resistance, or the most universal laws of nature*,”—but that time of tranquillity has past away.

* HUME’S *Essay on Original Contract*.

The human mind has received an impulse which shakes it with a kind of feverish agitation, and induces an impatience of repose. To its diseased and nervous irritability change ever appears to smile with the auguries of golden promise, while all that is established is regarded without any of the ancient reverence for prescription. We have acquired a taste for experiment ; we are desirous of attempting some new thing, and the wisest appointments of our fathers are slighted as the barbarisms of a darker age. Every thing is investigated and discussed without any tenderness for the importance of the object, or consideration of our ability for the task. The word duty has lost its sacred import to the understanding, and no longer strikes upon any chord that vibrates at the heart. It intimates a constraint ; and, though an amiable con-

straint, corresponding to mutual claims and obligations, it has become repulsive to our undefined and irregular aspirations after freedom. The child begins to doubt the authority of the parent; the servant of the master; the subject of the prince. The meanest among us, by his evening fire, or as he plies his handicraft, mingles in ignorant discussions on the rights of government, and boldly vindicates his privilege of resistance. Each is jealous of the higher power, and restless in a lower station, and clamorous for the reasons of his subjection.—Has infidelity any thing to offer which may appease his doubts, and satisfy his inquiries, and conciliate his discontent?—Is it imagined that the understanding of the peasant or the mechanic, suffering by temporary privations, and warped by passion, by prejudice and by evil counsels, will be in-

duced to a patient submission to authority, by the persuasion of any of the subtile speculations of philosophy?

You may tell him of an original contract, in which each man has surrendered a portion of his liberty for the security of the rest, and require his obedience to its conditions;—he has never heard of such a contract;—he denies the right of any second person to negotiate the limits of his actions;—he finds that neither his father nor his most distant ancestors have ever witnessed to such a covenant; and he boldly challenges the production of it. Thus urged, you acknowledge that the whole is an invention of the learned—a philosophic fiction—a kind of sandy and artificial mound, that you have raised as the support of your scheme of civil rights and duties, which it had been found impossible to erect on any more natural

and substantial basis. With whatever eloquence the claims of this visionary bond may be enforced, surely the subject may very justly hesitate to comply with its demands, and deny that the ingenious falsehood can be binding to his conscience.

But there is another plea, by which you would enjoin the duty of submission to authority—a plea that would address itself to the minds of the inferior and less privileged classes of civilized life, armed with all the point and force of logical deduction. It would derive its convictions from religion as distinct from, and independent of, revelation; and it partakes, in a more than ordinary degree, of all that inconclusiveness and doubt, which is inseparable from every attempt to raise the fabric of our earthly or our eternal happiness on any other foundation than

that which, by the mercy of the Almighty, has been laid, “which is in Christ Jesus*.” You would require the voluntary subjection of the inferior, because God willeth the happiness of his creatures ; and, as civil government promotes that happiness, obedience to civil government is therefore a compliance with the will of God. Here the whole strength of your argument lies on the very point which your adversary disputes ;—he grants that “ God willeth the happiness of his creatures ;” but he will advance no farther with you. He will not hearken to the elaborate discussion, or the subtile proof, of the second proposition, from which your conclusion is deduced ; he either contests the fact, or only acknowledges its truth, under other modifications, than those which actually exist ; and he disco-

* 1 Corinthians, ch. iii. v. 11.

vers the duty of resistance in the very arguments from which you would derive the duty of submission. “If,” says your opponent, “God willeth the happiness of his creatures, he must also will a more equal participation of his earthly blessings.” He argues, therefore, that such a large monopoly, and so extensive an impoverishment, must be offensive to the just benevolence of the Almighty; and, like Spence, among whose disciples he is perhaps enrolled, he clamorously demands the abolition of your power, and the confiscation of your inheritance, because he deems the happiness of the majority of mankind to be connected with a less partial and restricted distribution.

Thus insufficient is every suggestion of human reason to induce the submission of the inferior, as a concession rather than a compulsion, or, in other terms, to

procure a state of peace between the higher and the lower gradations of society, rather than a state of war. If the arguments were more conclusive and more level to common apprehension, I do not believe that their influence would be at all enhanced, or that they would prevail against the inward solicitations of the passions, or the constant comparison of the poor man's wants with the rich man's affluence. The cold calculations of the political economist would never be brought to bear against such resistless prepossessions. Controversy would only aggravate the enmity. There is nothing but the Gospel which could effectually interpose and silence the interminable and irritating discussions, and by its sacred infallibility assert for the superior the right to rule, and impose on the dependant the duty to submit.

* “Whoever overthrows religion,” says Plato, “overthrows the foundations of all human society.”—† “A people of philosophers,” says Diderot, speaking of that atheistical sect of which he was so distinguished a member, “a people of philosophers, if it were possible to form one, would find that its cradle was its tomb from the very vice of its constitution.” It was from the perception of this fact, that, wherever the light of revelation was unknown, men strove to feign its sanctions by asserting for their laws and institutions a supernatural descent, and imitating, by the dreams of superstition, that religious consecration which has been ef-

* *De Legibus*, 10.

† *Corrèspondance of GRIMM and DIDEROT*, vol. I. 492. —“On a dit quelquefois qu’un peuple chrétien, tel qu’il doit être suivant l’esprit de l’Evangile, ne saurait subsister. Cela serait bien plus vrai d’un peuple philosophe, s’il était possible d’en former un ; il trouverait sa perte, au sortir du berceau, dans le vice de sa constitution.”

fectually afforded by the truth of the Gospel. There is nothing but the halo, which the faith has shed around the fabric of society, and by which it is represented to our veneration as a temple that we may piously adorn, but which it were worse than sacrilege injuriously to approach, that preserves its stability amid the accessions of popular calamity, or prevents its swaying with every breath of popular passion, or falling before the first violent attack of popular resentment.

Christianity has placed the duty of civil obedience on the same level with the other obligations of morality. If it has said "fear God," it has also said "honour the king;"—if it has said "thou shalt not kill," or, "thou shalt not steal," or "thou shalt not commit adultery," it has also said, "let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." The Gospel

has declared itself on this subject with the same force and clearness with which it has delivered its less questioned precepts. The duty rests on the same grounds, the recorded will of the Almighty, and is guarded by the same assurances, the hopes of everlasting mercy, and the terrors of everlasting judgment.

I of course do not mean to attribute to Christianity those ordinances, which in less enlightened times were promulgated under its supposed authority, and which asserted that the right by which power is held is at once divine and undefeasible, and that our duty requires of us an obedience unresisting and irrespective. This is as much an unwise exaggeration of the Gospel precepts, as if one were to extend the commandment of "thou shalt do no murder," to an exclusion of the right of self-defence. But even these exploded

dogmas are better practical principles, can be supported by stronger arguments*, and are infinitely less calculated to disturb the tranquillity of the social world, than the institutes of those who

“Maintain the multitude can never err,
And set the people in the papal chair†,”

who would derive the right of government entirely from popular consent; and who would invalidate its energies, by continually dwelling on the privilege of resistance, till opposition appears the rule, and submission the exception.

There may be cases in which two obligations clash. The will of man may be at issue with the will of the Almighty, and then there can be no doubt to whom the reverence is due. I know the clergy are generally accused of insisting, with

* As a proof of this, see Bishop BERKELEY's *Tract on Passive Obedience*; and Bishop TAYLOR's *Rule of Conscience*, Book III. chap. iii. Rule 3.

† DRYDEN—*The Medal*.

too much earnestness, on the duty of civil obedience, and of not allowing sufficient latitude to the spirit of opposition. If this be the case, we are justified by the approbation even of our greatest adversary—of one who had attacked our faith, and undermined our influence, and who has libelled our characters* with a virulence, which public opinion would have resented

* See Note I, to the *Essay on National Character*—in which Hume endeavours to prove, from the very circumstances of our situation, that we must be worse than ordinary men. He says that our hatreds are peculiarly rancorous, and authorizes his assertion on the proverb of “*Odium theologicum* ;”—which is just as rational an argument as if one were to call all lawyers iniquitous, or all physicians ignorant, or all travellers untrue, on the authority of Foote or of Moliere. We have no defence against the Proteus forms of accusation. If we are bad, we are doubly disgraced, because, it is said, we are by our profession bound to be better than our neighbours;—if we are good, it is only hypocrisy, for the strictness of that profession necessarily constrains us to be worse. Hume, in his *Essay on National Character*, contrasts clerical vices with military virtues. It was prudent at least to lay the opprobrium of his philosophical speculations on the class least likely to visit his calumnies with any personal chastisement.

as illiberal, if we had not been marked for obloquy, by the sacredness of our profession, and excluded from the boasted liberality of the irreligious, by our more immediate connexion with the service of the Creator. Hume has said, that as “obedience is our duty in the common course of things, it ought chiefly to be inculcated; nor can any thing be more preposterous than an anxious care, or solicitude, in stating all the cases in which resistance may be allowed. In like manner, though a philosopher reasonably acknowledges, in the course of an argument, that the rules of justice may be dispensed with in cases of urgent necessity, what should we think of a preacher, or casuist, who should make it his chief study to find out such cases, and enforce them with all the vehemence of argument and eloquence? Would he not be better em-

ployed in inculcating the general doctrine than in displaying the particular exceptions which we are, perhaps, but too much inclined of ourselves to embrace and to extend*?" If then the ministers of religion dwell upon the duty of submission, without weakening the impression of their lessons, by turning aside for the consideration of those extraordinary cases of exemption, which occur not above once or twice in a millennium;—in the above passage we find our justification. But it seems that we are interested in the cause, and, therefore, culpable for the performance of an office which is acknowledged to be a property of our ministration. We are not to inculcate a virtue, because we ourselves may be benefited by its practice. This is a *non sequitur* of the grossest absurdity. We certainly are interested

* *Essay on Passive Obedience.*

in the preservation of national order and tranquillity. Every individual of the kingdom, except the ferocious inhabitant of the prison, the outlawed fugitive from public justice, and the man whose bad ambition would be satisfied to erect his throne upon the ruins of his country ; —except these, and such as these, every individual in the kingdom is naturally interested in preserving the immunities of virtue, and the restraints on crime, in warding off the wanton conflagration, and in preventing the indiscriminate slaughter of revolution. So far the minister of religion is interested with the wisest, and the best, in declaring to the dependant classes of society the legitimate claims of their superiors. They are to render “ custom to whom custom—honour to whom honour—tribute to whom tribute ;”—these obligations the Christian clergyman is so-

lemnly engaged to illustrate and enforce. But here his occupation meets its limits. With the peculiar opinions of the several political parties in a state, he acknowledges neither participation or communion. His business is with the general duties of mankind, and not with the petty factions and divisions, which are struck asunder in the collision of the passions of the world. There is no side on which he can with dignity array himself. If his voice be mingled with those of the flatterers of power, he makes “his good to be evil spoken of* ;” he affords a just occasion of suspecting that he fawns to

* While he makes his own good to be evil spoken of, and thus injures religion in the disgrace of its servant, he also, in some degree, impedes the cause he supports. Johnson, in his inimitable description of the arts, by which signatures are gained to popular addresses, says that some sign them “to vex the parson.” A man cannot depart from the line of duty without exciting somewhere a counteracting power to urge him back again to his proper station.

rise ; he is no longer to be distinguished from the ignominious votaries of avarice and ambition ; and he loses the reverence of mankind as he becomes included under the dominion of their passions : and if, on the other hand, he unite in the clamour of opposition, his politics assume a hue of discontent and envy, and are marked by traits of bitterness and asperity, that very ungracefully connect themselves with the character of his faith, or the humility of his profession. A minister of the Saviour degrades himself from the high prerogative of his station when he surrenders his sublime neutrality. By the very virtue of his situation he is the moderator, the arbiter, and not the accessory, of faction. His office is to pass among the parties like some consecrated herald, and keep alive in each the benevolence of their common Christianity, while they are most

widely separated by the opposition of their sentiments. His holy and important delegation is to stand between them, like Aaron “ between the living and the dead,” and correct the exaggerations of dispute, and persuade to mutual concession, and to deprecate the violence of enmity. He has no concern with the little differences of political opinion. The Bible speaks not of these distinctions ; and it is from the Bible that all this authority is derived. But he is concerned in the manner by which those opinions are supported ; for here the language of the Bible is explicit, intelligible and direct, in declaring that the subject shall not rise in rebellion against his rulers. This is an ordinance of his religion, and he abandons a very important part of his divine commission, if he permit himself to be deterred from impressing the conviction of

this law on the minds of the people ;— however, in the hour of peace, the honest execution of his trust may be reproached by anonymous attack or vulgar insinuation, or however, in the terrors of the civil contest, it may expose his life to the malignity of the mutinous.

It certainly does appear to me, reading the volume of Revelation, I hope without prejudice or prepossession, but with an humble desire to receive the word of God in the sense designed by the Holy Spirit, that no commandment is more distinctly stated than that of willing submission to authority ;—that this duty enjoins at least some degree of endurance from the subject ; and that there is a religious virtue in that endurance. The language of revelation is so plain and so forcible upon this head, that Milton himself, when he attempted to warp its sense to the service

of the regicides, and to mitigate the scriptural condemnation of their actions, becomes guilty of quibbles and evasions that would have disgraced a criminal under the terrors of conviction*. I can scarcely

* I here allude to his tract on the tenure of Kings and Magistrates. I could not find a more striking instance of the subterfuges to which the assertors of the right of *violent* opposition to government are reduced than the following passage :—" Be he king, or tyrant, or emperor, the sword of justice is above him ; in whose hand soever is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion of so great a deluge of innocent blood. For if all human power to execute, not accidentally, but intendedly, the wrath of God upon evil doers without exception, be of God, then that power, whether ordinary, or, if that fail, extraordinary, so executing that intent of God, is lawful and not to be resisted."

In this passage Milton voluntarily misunderstands St. Paul, who, as is seen from the context, evidently uses the word " power" as synonymous with " civil authority." Having thus perverted the Apostle's meaning, he derives from it a maxim that justifies assassination, or poison, or any kind of murder, of unjust magistrates, under the pretence that " the power" was in the hands of the agent, and that he was therefore religiously justified in avenging " the deluge of innocent blood." Milton found that Scripture would afford no support to his arguments, and he therefore deserts it, in the conclusion of his work, for the more favourable authority of certain Calvinistic divines.

conceive any thing more express than the following passage from St. Paul:—" Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God:— Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power; do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not a sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: For they are

God's ministers attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour*." It appears impossible that any injunction should be more unequivocally expressed, or be more studiously comprehensive ; and when it is remembered that this is not a solitary precept ; that there are innumerable other passages of revelation which authorize the lesson it conveys, and none which militate against it ; when it is remembered that, at the time this instruction was delivered, the sceptre of the world was swayed by a monarch who disgraced humanity, and that the persons to whom it was immediately addressed were obnoxious to every rigour of persecution, which his most inveterate and ingenious

* Romans, ch. xiii. verses 1 to 8.

malice could invent; when we remember that the Redeemer, “who died leaving us an example*,” mildly surrendered himself to death, and indignantly rejected every attempt at rescue†, in obedience to the iniquitous decision of the constituted authorities;—when we remember the express letter of the Scriptures, and these its impressive corroborations, we must either impiously conceive that the Holy Spirit tampers with us in a double sense, and that the example of the Saviour is defective; or honestly acknowledge, that the duty of civil submission to princes and to magistrates is not one of those insignificant observances which may with impunity be allowed or doubted, adopted or renounced, as it coincides with

* 1 St. Peter, ch. ii. v. 21.

† John, chap. xviii. v. 10, 11. Matt. chap. xxvi. ver. 51 to 54.

the caprices, or offends the inclinations, of the moment. Patience of wrong, slowness of resentment, and forgiveness of injuries, are confessed on all sides to be among the ordinary obligations imposed upon the disciple of the Messiah. Who will venture, with any confidence, to assert that these precepts are to be inscribed upon the code of his domestic and his social morals, and considered as superfluous to his political relations?—"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but from God."—There would have been very little necessity for this commandment, and not the slightest merit in our compliance with its requisition, if obedience were only to be rendered as long as we participated in the benefits of prudent counsels and of wise enactments, and of a perfect execution of the laws. Our reverence for au-

thorities would then have fallen under another class of duty in gratitude for the communication of such blessings ; but we are also to submit, though the arm of power may press somewhat heavily upon us. We are then placed in the situation of exercising the suffering and forbearing virtues. The extent of such endurance I do not take upon myself to limit or appoint. Addison has wisely estimated its proportions. “ The obedience of children to parents,” says the author of the *Spectator**, “ is the basis of all government, and set forth as the measure of that obedience which we owe to those whom Providence has placed over us.” These terms coincide with every principle of Christian duty ; and with the same affection should we meditate the good and lament the misfortunes of our

* *Spectator*, Number 189.

superiors ; with the same tenderness should we excuse their little imperfections, and veil them from too public and too curious an observation ; with the same gentle deference should we remonstrate with their errors ; and only at the same extremity, with a grieving spirit, and after a long and a respectful patience, should we dare to disunite ourselves from those alliances which “ God has joined,” and which nothing but the most imperious necessity should compel “ man to put asunder.”

It has been said by an eloquent writer, whose works are extremely popular among the dissenting portion of our countrymen, “ that the only way to determine the agreement of any thing with the will of God is to consider its influence on the happiness of society ; so that in this view the question of passive obedience is re-

duced to a simple issue : Is it best for the human race that every tyrant and usurper be submitted to without check or control?—It ought likewise to be remembered, that if the doctrine of passive obedience be true, princes should be taught it, and instructed, that to whatever excesses of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no resistance on the part of the people. If this maxim appear to be conducive to general good, we may fairly presume it concurs with the will of the Deity ; but if it appear pregnant with the most mischievous consequences, it must disclaim such support*.” To this passage I have two

* This passage is from the Preface of HALL’s pamphlet on the liberty of the Press ; it is in answer to a sermon of Bishop HORSLEY on the duty of submission, but, I think, not on passive submission, as Hall understands it, any more than a sermon against murder would recommend a quiet submission to a cut-throat. The bishop enforces, as he ought to do, the general duty, and does not digress to consider the

objections. I protest against the rule of interpretation ; and, even if the rule were warranted, I doubt the justice of its application. As Christians we have no interest in the consideration of the possible consequences of any religious precept or opinion, which we find to be really and undeniably inculcated by the oracles of God. The adoption of Hall's method of judgment were to set up the imbecility of

exceptions. We have nothing to do in the common circumstances of life, with those extremities which render resistance venial. Bishop Horsley's sermon was preached before the House of Lords, and for such a place there was perhaps an error in the choice of subject. A sermon on obedience to authorities is adapted for the mixt congregation of the parish church ; its delivery before the aristocracy of the country was an idle waste of an opportunity of good, and a flattery of the very passions which it was his duty as a minister of Christianity to rebuke. In such a situation, and before such an audience, his theme should have been connected with the duties which the great owed to their inferiors, and for which they are eternally responsible to their God. Bishop Latimer or Bishop Andrews would not have been guilty of such an unprofitable misapplication of their talents.

human reason against the perfect intelligence of the Almighty, and to oppose the speculations of our doubtful metaphysics to the eternal ordinances by which the universe is governed. The Almighty has not conferred upon us so imperfect and inadequate a revelation as to require that the reason should prepare the way in which the wisdom of the Gospel is to follow. The Christian is not called upon to agitate his mind, by balancing the remote effects and the possible operations of the divine commandments. Such a timid scrutiny appears to indicate a deficiency of faith, a suspicion of the wisdom, and a distrust of the providence, of God. Our duty is strictly limited to the study of the Gospel, and to the performance of its instructions. Beyond this we have neither an obligation or an interest : and we may with humble confidence re-

sign all anxiety respecting the results and tendencies of our conduct to the superintending benevolence of the Almighty, who will never fail to regulate the happiness of mankind by the measure of their obedience to his laws. But while I most solemnly dissent from that rule of judgment which would separate between the divine commandments, and acknowledge or reject them, according to some speculative estimate of their probable effects, I am most religiously confident that the tree will ever be known by its fruits ; that obedience to the will of the Eternal will invariably conduct to salutary issues ; and, on that very principle, when the sacred ordinance is so unequivocally written, I should doubt the melancholy event which the amiable antagonist of Bishop Horsley anticipates, from an inviolable

compliance with the Christian duty of submission to superiors.

Let it not for a moment be supposed, while I thus assert the just claims of the powerful, that I would appear as the advocate of tyranny, or breathe a sentence that might reproach the glory, or extenuate the praise, of freedom.—I love liberty as well as the eloquent assertor of the freedom of the press can love it.—Every heart that is inspired with the adoration of the Saviour will abhor oppression in proportion as the soul is purified by the knowledge of his Gospel, by the imitation of his example, and by the communion of his Spirit. But when, on the authority of Revelation, I call for the dutiful submission of the subject, my mind is forcibly persuaded that I advance the cause of liberty, and propose the only

ground on which it can successfully be planted, or permanently thrive.—When it is said by Hall that “if the doctrine of passive obedience be true, princes should be taught it, and instructed, that to whatever excesses of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no resistance on the part of the people,” he surely has forgotten that we no longer are discussing any human proposition; that we no longer are investigating the political maxim of Plato* or of Tacitus†; but a precept advanced on the irresistible authority of the Omniscent, and defended by super-

* “Id enim Plato jubet—vim neque parenti, neque patriæ afferri oportere atque hanc quidem ille causam sibi, ait, non attingendæ reipublicæ fuisse, quod cum offendisset populum Atheniensem prope jam desipientem senectute, cumque eum nec persuadendo, nec cogendo regi posse vidisset, cum persuaderi posse diffideret, cogi fas esse non arbitraretur.”—CICERO, *Ad Divers.*, i. 8.

† “Imperatores bonos voto expetendos, qualescunque tolerandos.”—TACITUS, *Hist.*, iv. 8.

human and everlasting sanctions. If we were contesting a mere speculative principle of political philosophy, there might, perhaps, be some room for controversy. If the duty simply rested on the grounds of natural reason, it might, with much plausibility, be alleged, that some checks would be demanded to counteract the encroachments of authority ; and that such a necessary restraint could only be supplied by the apprehensions of exasperating the people. Such an argument, fallacious as it is, might afford occasion for much eloquence of declamation, from those who love the tumult of licentiousness, rather than the peace of a liberal obedience. But under the Gospel dispensation it has no possible reference to the conditions on which society exists. The same voice which commands the reverence or the patience of the subject, commands with

an equal emphasis the protection and the clemency of the monarch. The same motives which induce the submission of the weak, restrain the excesses of the powerful; and, unless it can be proved that the poor alone are actuated by the convictions of religion; that, on the throne and on the judgment-seat, there is contained an anodyne against the terrors of the grave and the reproaches of the conscience; that to the mighty of the earth the felicities of heaven present no objects of alluring hope; that to the breasts of princes hell and its eternity of woe convey no horrible forebodings:—unless the faith is limited in its sphere of influence, it never can be true, that the Christian lessons of enduring subjection on the one hand, and of mild dominion on the other, when inculcated as duties of religion, should operate as inducements to tyranny

and encouragements of oppression. In the common order of events, by the general laws of Providence, the effect must be diametrically opposite. All human things are eventually directed by opinion. This is an axiom of universal application. The example of the monarch may afford a sanction to the vices of his subjects, but the example of his subjects must first prepare the way for the vices of the monarch. His conduct will always be in unison with the tone of popular feeling ; it will never more exceed the prevalent iniquity of the multitude than might be expected from the affluence of his means, the multiplicity of his temptations, and the facilities of offending. If the Roman Emperors were prodigies of crime, they were attainted by the contagious exhalations that mounted the Palatine from the corruptions of the people. There is a

harmony of thought and feeling which pervades every society ; and if the rulers of a nation be found voluptuous or cruel, venal or unjust, the manners of the inferior classes will always supply the successive notes of the diapason. But when the Almighty in his mercy communicated to mankind the Gospel of his Son, he presented to the world the sacred institutes, from which the public mind was to derive its estimate of conduct and its principles of action. He prescribed the channel in which the stream of opinion was to flow. The Gospel naturally directs to equal rule and liberality of government ; it opposes a permanent resistance to tyranny and injustice ; it operates with a steady, even, and continued agency for the amelioration of the condition of mankind ; it is the seed which the Lord has sown, and it will inevitably arise in majesty,

and spread over us its protecting branches, and fill the air with fragrance ; if, with faith in the wisdom, and devout reliance on the providence, of God, we will allow it to grow up and flourish beneath the genial influences of heaven, and not destroy the promise of its blossoms by endeavours to anticipate the fruit. They who would dispense with the peaceful energies of religious opinion, and attempt to accelerate its progress, by stimulating the passions of the multitude to revolt, act as Herod did when he inquired of the birth-place of the Messiah ;—they incarnadine their souls in the blood of the innocents, and put to flight the blessing that they would pretend to glorify.

—According to the Gospel-views of morals and of duty, obedience to superiors, —contented, cheerful, and affectionate obedience,—by no means rests on the

unsupported authority of the texts to which we have referred in the preceding pages. It is interwoven with the whole system of our religion ; it succeeds as a natural effect of the holy dispositions which it inculcates. A good Christian must be a good subject. That love which is the distinguishing and peculiar characteristic of his faith must be eradicated from his soul, ere the heart will swell with the passions of the disaffected, or his voice be raised in the counsels of sedition, or his hand be armed in their support.

The charity of the Christian is not abridged and circumscribed in its action. His mild affections do not only rest with those who are on a level with himself, or communicate in gentle offices with his inferiors, while they timidly retreat from every eminence that is raised above their

proper elevation. There is no envy mingled with his perception of pre-eminence. He knows that the superintending providence of God has ordained to each his station, and attributed to each his duties; and, as the disciple of that Redeemer, "who died for the sins of the whole world," he would scorn to love his fellow-creature less, because the Almighty has appointed his brother heir of immortality to tread the sunny acclivities of life, while he is doomed to toil in the shade of the valley.

The charity of the Christian does not seek its own but the general advantage. It does not vent the sense of disappointed ambition in the clamours of disaffection; nor meditate the resentment of a private wrong in the overwhelming vengeance of a public calamity; nor endeavour to undermine where it was not permitted to

preside ; nor strive to sink the vessel, because another might be stationed at the helm.

The charity of the Christian will not fawn before the iniquities of the mighty ; or flatter the vicious favourite ; or fear to utter its reproof with a modest and a manly openness ; or sell its truth and honour for the wages of infamy ; or act as the subsidiary of wicked counsels ;—but neither will it suffer him to commit a present certain evil, for the sake of a remote possible good. He cannot overlook the terrors of revolution in the anticipation of the casual benefit that may succeed it. He will not speculate on murders and conflagrations, and the infraction of the laws, and the violences of an infuriated people, as the means of political reformation, any more than he would calmly dwell upon the artificial

fertility which waves its harvests, for a few brief summers, above the bones that whiten on the battle plain, and contemplate the watering his fields with blood as an invention of agricultural economy*.

The charity of the Christian does not instruct him to believe, that his superiors are exalted above the operation of the virtues of his religion; that they are raised to a cold and desolate ascendancy, to which the kind affections, that are liberally diffused to others, can never soar to cheer them, and whence they may look down upon the richness and the beauty of the lower earth, while they are themselves surrounded by a mountainous and stony barrenness. He does not conceive that the Gospel laws are abrogated with

* Does not the constant defence of the French Revolution, and the heartless estimate of its few beneficial results, savour of such insensibility?

reference to them, or that its decrees are superfluous to their happiness. He does not imagine that, while their temptations are most perilously multiplied, and their infirmities more conspicuously manifest, they alone are outcasts from the protection of that benevolence by which the failings of others are extenuated, and which commands that man shall “not judge his neighbour, lest himself be judged, nor condemn, lest he also be condemned.”

The charity of the Christian does not ignorantly fancy that slander is the less slander, because it strikes at exalted marks, and is conversant with venerable names: it does not suppose that the offence, which is criminal against an equal, can acquire impunity from the very circumstances that aggravate its guilt: it does not deem that calumny becomes venial because it mingles with sedition,

because it is derived from darker sources, because it is less an object of personal knowledge, because it is supported by less obvious authority, and is succeeded by more lamentable results. Not believing that a crime acquires to itself an honour, and a dignity, from the terror of its effects, the faithful disciple of the Saviour feels that the disseminating of injurious reports and malignant insinuations, which the law of the Almighty has prohibited, when directed against the peace of families, can never become innocent by being levelled against the order and tranquillity of nations. He knows that all human things subsist by opinion ; that evil hints, and insidious whisperings, and the supposition of ungenerous motives, and the lighter scoffs of ridicule, insinuate away the reverence of government ; that these inconsiderable things waste the energies

of power, as the rock is wasted by the water-drop ; and his charity instructs him that he may not weaken the foundations of the social column, by tearing missiles from them, to hurl against the statue that crowns and beautifies its summit.

The charity of the Christian “ would do as it would be done by.” If it would be safe within its cottage from riotous intrusion, it would also vindicate for the inhabitant of the palace the same inviolable security. His charity is not exclusive :—we have read of a charity that was, which invented an unnatural alliance of love and hate ; which imagined a wild confusion of the virtues of heaven with the vices of the earth ; and, as of that strange union of the elder world, when the sons of God and the daughters of men were mingled, most gigantic and appalling was the monstrous progeny—

I mean the charity of the infidel philosophy. In France a cry was raised “ of peace to the cottage and of war to palaces*.” The words were reiterated by applauding multitudes. The sentiment was hailed as the watchword of revolution ; and its tender mercies were witnessed at the guillotine ; and its records received their deep inscription upon the earth in the many channels which were fretted by the blood of its victims. But the charity of the Gospel is unacquainted with any reservations. The whole creation is its object. It would deliver from the slightest corporal sufferance the poor insect that we tread upon ; it scales the Empyrean, and soars aloft upon the wings of angels, in emotions of adoration and of praise to the ever-

* “ Guerre aux châteaux ; paix à la chaumière :”—This, the war-cry of the Revolutionists, originated in Condorcet.

glorious and unimaginable presence of our Redeemer and our God. It is an intimate communion with the predominating attribute of the Creator, and is infinite as the Holy Spirit of that Deity from whom it is an emanation and an impulse. If it beam with a more cheering brightness; if it glow with a kindlier ardour for the friends of our childhood, and the companions of our youth, and the inmates of our home, there exists not a single living thing that is alienated from its sympathies; and, if it willingly descend to mingle tears of pity with the sorrows of the poor, it encounters no impediment in its ascent to the loftier habitations of the mighty.

Under the prevalence of such a disposition, the germs of civil animosity are destroyed. Remove from the public mind that discontent which loathes inferiority;

the intrigues of disappointed ambition ; the factious feelings of baffled pride ; the love of aspiring slanders ; the malignant spirit with which our jealousy surveys the actions, and perverts the motives, and criticises the good, and exaggerates the evil of our superiors ; remove from the public mind these vicious provocations to political hostility, and it is impossible that the tranquillity of civil life, with which the privileges and the property of the higher classes of society are so inseparably connected, should ever be endangered by the rebellious encroachments of their inferiors. There would be no resistance to authority, but such as would be honestly derived from the diversities of human character, the nature of our studies, and the peculiarities of our pursuits. There would be a mild discussion of the designs, and an impartial exami-

nation of the wisdom, of our public councils. But such an opposition would be the stability rather than the weakness of the state ; it would be as the purifying airs of heaven which agitate the stagnant atmosphere, and preserve the vitality of its mass, rather than as the tempest that appals the people, and lays waste their habitations ; it would originate in honourable principle, and be supported with a manly confidence ; and it would be urged, on the legitimate occasions of expressing it, with the calmness which is inseparable from the deliberate consideration of the truth, and without any of the animosity which is begotten in the contest for victory.

It has been said by Sully *, “ that the

* “ Pour la populace, ce n'est jamais par envie d'attaquer qu'elle se soulève mais par impatience de souffrir.”—SULLY *Mémoires*, vol. 1. p. 133.

people are never excited to revolution by the desire to attack, but by the impatience of suffering." This great man spoke of a Christian people, of a multitude, not doubting the authority of their governors to rule, or the duty of the subject to obey. Their faith, therefore, would hold them to their allegiance by a common sentiment; and nothing but the sympathy of a common calamity could defeat its influence, and urge them to rebel. But, in the absence of those religious feelings and opinions which, by a mild coercion and affectionate inducement, persuade the individual to the duties of his station, and confine him, by spiritual barriers, from every aggression on his fellows, it may very fairly be disputed whether the many would require the sympathy of want or the impulse of distress to associate in conspiracy, or to

provoke sedition. There would be sufficient points of contact, and sufficient incitements continually before them. They would be united by the animal propensities of our nature ; by pride, that hated the dominion which constrained it ; by the avidity of plunder ; by the love of desperate hazards, which would stake the little good that it possessed against the richer prize that might be won amid the incalculable accidents of revolution. These views are by no means grounded on private or solitary speculation. They are objects of general consent. They are axioms tacitly admitted, as principles of action, by every modern apostle of sedition. All who have desired to overthrow the established institutions of their country, from the guilty conspirators against God and man, who persecuted our moral happiness, in the pages of the *Encyclopédie*,

to their ignominious disciples, whose writings,—like the cold and the burning paroxysms of an intermittent ague,—now shake the healthy spirit, and now make feverish the noble temper of our nation with accessions of periodical blasphemy—all have aimed at the faith of Jesus, their first blow of hostility against the state.—They feel that Christianity is the bond by which society is permanently connected, and that division cannot exist till the bond is severed;—that it is the principle of love, and that enmity never can irreconcilably predominate among the degrees of men till the venerable impulse be extinct;—that it is the heart that supplies the body with animation and support, and they would stab the heart that they might hack the limbs.

It was maintained by Hobbes, that “the natural condition of man is a state

of war—a war of all men against all men ; that there is no way so reasonable for any man as to anticipate, that is, by force and wiles to master all the persons of others that he can, so long till he sees no other power great enough to endanger him*.” These maxims are quoted by Leland as extraordinary. But they follow as immediate results from the principles of the man who uttered them.—Such must necessarily be the views and sentiments of every candid unbeliever. Hobbes surveyed mankind as separated from their connexions with the revealed Divinity ; and he has most admirably portrayed the savageness of an apostate and God-abandoned world. The enmity between the two classes of society is, according to every natural principle, so inevitable a consequence of their respective

* Principles extracted by Leland from the *Leviathan*.

conditions, that they, who are ignorant of the efficacy of Christianity, or omit to calculate its power, can imagine no other feeling to subsist between the parties than that of a reciprocal hostility. “If,” says Hazlitt, who ranks as a mighty teacher in the modern school of infidel philosophy, “if the lower ranks are actuated by envy and uncharitableness towards the upper, the latter have scarcely any feelings but of pride, contempt, and aversion to the former*.” This is not the actual situation of mankind; but it is the situation to which the want of Christianity would reduce us. Without the reception of those sacred precepts of religion, which impose the offices of gentle rule and of mild obedience, the social world would either be the prey of an anarchy that trampled down every salu-

* *Table Talk.*

tary restraint, or of a despotism that en-
chained it. If this faith in the Gospel
were withdrawn, society might, perhaps,
for a little while retain something of a
regular movement from the mere “vis
inertiæ” of its former impulse; it might
be preserved a short time by the linger-
ing purity of its decaying morals; it
might yet a little while be bright with
the reflected glow of evening, though the
sun had sunk beneath the ocean:—but
that impulse would gradually weaken,—
that purity would perish,—that twilight
would pass away; and as the moral night
began to blacken on the horizon, every
populous city would teem with insurrec-
tion; every peasant calculate on the spoils
of his master; every hovel would become
tenanted with its gaunt conspirators. In-
feriority would be synonymous with sedi-
tion. The poor would be instinct with

malice ; they would brood over their fancied wrongs, and meditate imaginary oppressions ; they would indulge the wild exaggerations that worked as insanity within them, and become familiar with the dreams of secret assassination and clandestine vengeance, till the correspondent deed became at length habitual to their practice. From such opponents,—and we cannot yet so entirely have lost the recollection of what horrors the unbelieving disciples of revolt may meditate, as to doubt whether such opponents would exist ;—from the wild successors of such men as Despard or Thistlewood the depositaries of political power would have but one method of relief—to intimidate, to weaken, and to oppress ; to surround themselves by military defences ; to rely on the swords and bucklers of their soldiery for a brief and precarious

existence till they were basely sold by them for a more liberal donative, or murdered, at the sudden change of favour, by the Janissaries, who were collected for their protection.—* “Powerful, formidable monarchs,” exclaims Voltaire, in his letter to Frederic the Great, “who command millions of men and invincible legions, religion is the strongest bulwark of your thrones, and the most respectable tie of society, the most certain guarantee of your authority and the subordination of the people. It is religion that must be responsible for their fidelity and service, which compels them to lavish their blood and fortunes for your defence and preservation;—by this, good order, peace, and harmony are supported among your

* This extract from Voltaire is from Broughton's *Age of Christian Reason*, in which volume the entire letter is translated.

subjects, as well as that spirit of concord and universal benevolence which unite them like one great family. In fine, it is religion that stops the regicide hand of a male-content proscribed and disgraced, and prevents his avenging your violence and injustice. Were there no religion each one would give a loose to his passions; each one would exert his strength to oppress the weak, his cunning to deceive the simple, his eloquence to seduce the credulous, his credit to destroy commerce, his power to promulgate terror, horror, bloodshed, carnage ;—shocking disorders in themselves, but inseparable from the principles of infidelity.”—* “ Our modern governments,” says Rousseau, “ are incontestably indebted to Christianity for their more secure authority, and their less frequent revolutions.” It is the

* ROUSSEAU—*Emile*, tom. III. p. 199.

foundation of our social peace. “It has taught the powerful to rely on his dependants, and the dependant to confide in his superior*.”—This last sentence is in the words of Montesquieu—of an author whom I have often quoted; who had no prepossessions in favour of our religion; who viewed all things with the calm consideration of the philosopher; who was never tempted, by his imagination or his emotions, to exceed the measure of his authority, or advance a step which he had not first established upon proof.—Once, and only once, he is unwillingly betrayed into an expression of enthusiasm. As his meditative eye reposed on those fair proportions and that just agreement of society, to which the Messiah’s revelation has given rise, he exclaims,

* MONTESQUIEU—*Esprit des Loix*, b. xxiv. c. 3.—“Le prince compte sur les sujets, et les sujets sur le prince.”

in admiration of the work before him,
* “ Oh admirable faith !—Thus it is that
a religion, which only seems to have for
its object the happiness of another life,
creates for man the happiness of this.”

* “ Oh ! chose admirable ! La Religion Chrétienne, qui
ne semble avoir d'objet que la félicité de l'autre vie, fait
encore nôtre bonheur dans celle-ci.” — *Esprit des Loix*,
liv. xxiv. ch. 3.

CHAPTER I.

Sect. V.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO
HUMAN HAPPINESS AS THEY TEND TO
MODERATE THE FEROCITY OF WAR.

WHILE I maintain the absolute necessity of those convictions, which are derived from revelation to secure the peace and happiness of society, it would appear unfair to the opponents of the Gospel, and would certainly be unjust to Christianity itself, if I failed to notice a reproach which has very frequently been attributed to the charge of our religion. Every objection that can be advanced against the faith should be studiously recorded, and impartially investigated, for

the examination will always tend to the developement of some latent praise, and the illustration of some less obvious excellence.

It was inquired by De Volney*, what diminution would occur to the happiness of the world if the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament were consumed by some modern Omar, with the records which are revered as divine by the votaries of idolatry and superstition?—In consideration of the various misery to which religion had afforded the occasion or the pretext, he denominated the portion of his library, that contained the vo-

* Ces livres sont aux Indiens ce que sont l'ancien et le nouveau Testament aux Chrétiens, le Koran aux Musulmans, le Sadder et le Zend-avesta aux Perses, &c., en considérant ce qu'ils renferment tous, je me suis quelques-fois demandé quelle vérité perdrait le genre humain, si un nouvel Omar les brûlait ; et je n'en ai pu découvrir une seule : j'appelle la caisse où je les renferme la boîte de Pandore.—DE VOLNEY—*Ruines*, p. 305. 2d edit.

lumes which are revered as inspired by the different nations of the world, the real box of Pandora.—Of the consequences of other and erroneous creeds we have no present interest in inquiring. I believe no mode of superstition has ever been generally admitted by a people that did not communicate more of benefit than of injury; that did not preserve more of traditionary truth than it had received of human imagination; that did not more than atone for every malignant tendency, by its silent influences of consolation and of hope.—From the contemplation of those enormities, which appear to be inseparable from idolatry, we do not derive an argument for the abolition of the false, but a motive for the grateful reverence and the diligent promulgation of the true, religion. Any creed, by which man is connected with immortality, is

preferable to the despair of unbelief. It is more eligible that a few should suffer as the martyrs of superstition, than that the multitude, in the moments of affliction, should be bereaved of their reliance on divine protection; or, in the infinite combinations of their social intercourse, be delivered from the invisible restraints which are imposed on violence and fraud, and lust and malice, by the apprehensions of a future retribution.—Plutarch, indeed, maintained, and, under the persuasion of his arguments, Lord Bacon* and the sceptic Bayle† have been induced to coincide in the opinion, that atheism was more tolerable than idolatry. The question is susceptible of endless controversy. It proposes to us a painful

* BACON's *Essay on Superstition*, who gives the quotation from Plutarch.

† *Sur la Comète.*

choice between death or pain, stupor or delirium. It was once submitted to the determination of Johnson—his masculine and comprehensive intellect was fit to grapple with speculations of such gigantic magnitude: and he pronounced his verdict with a propriety and force of illustration which must ever bear conviction with his decision.—“ A man may live,” said the author of the Rambler, “ in a corrupted atmosphere, but he must die in an exhausted receiver*.”

But we have no concern with the effects of unhappy or mistaken methods of belief. The particular accusation urged against the Gospel alleges, that it has been the means of disturbing the tranquillity of the world; that it has excited the most violent and rancorous animosities; and that it has given rise to a series

* BOSWELL'S *Life of* JOHNSON.

of wars and persecutions of the most deadly and enduring character.—Such are the avowed or the insinuated charges to be encountered in the pages of Shaftesbury and of Collins ; of Hume and of Voltaire ; of Priestley and of Gibbon*.—“ Charity and brotherly love,” says the author of the *Characteristics*, “ are very engaging sounds, but who would dream that out of these should issue steel, fire, gibbets, and rods ?”—Who, indeed, would dream of such effects ?—That Christianity has been made the pretext of many guilty enmities can never be denied ; but if they were guilty, they were in the same degree unchristian.—It is true that the sacred garments of religion have been most deeply and terribly imbued in the blood of the human race ; and what has not afforded to the ferocity of man an argument for

* RYAN *on Religion*, vol. ii. p. 176.

the slaughter of his brother?—But surely the accusation here has been too hastily advanced, and too inconsiderately admitted.—Have we not condemned the Gospel for the vices of its disciples?—Have we not imposed on Christianity the reproach which is only merited by the beings to whom it is addressed?—Are we not attempting, like the Jews, to save Barabbas by the sacrifice of Jesus?—It is indisputably right to judge of principles by their effects, but before we resolve on our conclusion we ought first to be assured that the effects are the natural consequences of the principles. And to the inquirer who is thus cautious in his research, and honest in his judgment, it will appear, that if there be one error more wild and inconsequent than another in the whole system of infidelity, it is manifested in the endeavour to attain

the Gospel with the imputation of those severe hostilities and persecutions which have formerly disgraced the nominal disciples of the Saviour, or of those uncharitable affections by which they still continue to be disgraced.

The Son of God descended incarnate upon the earth on a mission of reconciliation and of instruction and of mercy:—his advent was hailed by the voices of angels in the air; and “peace on earth and good-will towards men” formed the burthen of the celestial anthem: his life was recorded for our example, and it contains an uninterrupted narrative of acts of benevolent power and unresisting endurance of oppression: he added to the moral code of preceding revelation a new commandment, as the characteristic symbol of his faith, and as the indispensable grace of his disciples; and that

commandment was, “ Love one another as I have loved you.” Such are the principles of the Gospel as they are exhibited in the actions, and proclaimed by the instructions, of the Messiah.—Those principles are charity and peace; and if the occasional effects have been enmity and war, what is the conclusion to be drawn from so extraordinary an inconsistency between the apparent cause and the practical result? — Every honest mind would attribute the distortion to the obliquity of the medium through which it passed. If the principle was good, and the consequences were evil, the malice must have existed in the instrument by which the principle received its operation. The irregularity, instead of diminishing the reverence, demonstrates the necessity, of the revelation. The contests that have originated in the perversion of Christianity

simply prove, that there is a deep, instinctive, complexional ferocity inherent in the disposition of the being to whom the religion has been communicated ; that the morbid corruption of his nature must be most perilously virulent when the manna of heaven only serves to engender a poison at the heart ; that there was a most urgent claim for the interposition of the Deity to mitigate and to repress the destructive violence of the passions, by some suggestions of religious hope and fear, since we find that they can even over-master the restraint of supernatural convictions, and pervert by their injurious alchymy the institutes of social peace into the bitterness of civil and domestic opposition, and corrupt the obligations to benevolence into the occasions of malignity.

Lord Bolingbroke acknowledged that

“ the wars, persecutions, and massacres, among the Christians ought in no part to be ascribed to the Gospel, nor could be reconciled to its principles*.” Every thing with which man is conversant has been converted into a subject of contest, and proposed as the price of victory†. Opposition is the element in which he seems to breathe most freely—war is the action that the natural man delights in.—If there be no immediate subject of foreign enmity, he will invent to himself, in the

* Vol. v. of his Works, p. 264—quoted by Leland.

† “ And still while man is man there will be found
 “ Those who on this, or any creed will ground,
 “ Or none at all, some false pretence to draw
 “ The scimitar ; and scorning every law
 “ Divine and human, like the deluge, flood
 “ Their native country with their brothers’ blood.
 “ —Ask you for proof from bigot zeal? review
 “ Charles’s dread deeds on St. Bartholomew.
 “ Ask you for proof from want of faith?—they’re clear
 “ In the dread deeds of Danton and Robespierre.”

MASON’S *Religio Cterici*.

slightest argument, an opportunity of strife. Every cause of separation, whether it be real or imaginary—whether it be the rivulet which flows between the boundaries of neighbouring nations, or the shadowy varieties of a creed, which, in all the master doctrines, is as immutable as the God from whom it was derived:—every, even the most trivial, subject of division will provoke and agitate the turbulent passions of the unregenerated heart; every, even the slightest, accident is sufficient according to the just and the severe, but the painful apologue in the *Idler*, “to drive men, by some unaccountable power, one against another, that vultures may be fed*.” From the creation of the world to the present hour, there has scarcely been an interval of

* *Idler*; from the paper which, in the original edition, was No. XXII.

general and uninterrupted peace among the nations, except that which harbingered the nativity of the Messiah ; when the world, exhausted by the labour of destruction, paused awhile, and rested upon its arms to meditate on the desolation it had wrought.

For the hostility and the bloodshed, therefore, which have been so frequently attributed to its charge, Christianity is not responsible. If we argue justly, it is not the religion of Jesus, but the depravity of man, that deserves to bear the condemnation. The animosities would have originated on some other plea, though the Saviour had never taught or suffered.—And this may be asserted with the greater confidence, because there has been evinced in every species of religious war or persecution more of policy than of faith ; more of contest for

power than of zeal for any peculiarity of creed*?

But if Christianity is innocent of the imputation with which it has been reproached; if it has not been the source of those implacable and deadly enmities, for which mankind, by connecting them with venerable names, have sought a consecration and an atonement; if it has not been the original occasion of those fields of blood, which ambition and pride and

* I consider this as true of every kind of religious persecution—of the Inquisition, of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the Anabaptist war in Germany, &c. &c.—The Reformation was opposed on account of the political influence and power which was connected with Popery; when the Reformists acquired the ascendancy, in addition to this motive, they were actuated by resentment for past sufferings, and by a dread of suffering again should their enemies recover their pre-eminence. I think it is Montesquieu who has said, that “every religion which is persecuted becomes persecuting; for if by any accident it acquires the superiority, it attacks its opponent, not as a religious sect, but as a worldly tyranny.”—On this subject see RYAN’s *History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind*, vol. ii. sec. 7.

bigotry and revenge have been solicitous to justify, by raising above their battle the banner of the Cross ; our most holy religion can assert for itself an opposite merit which none have had the temerity to controvert.—While it refutes the evil accusation, it claims to itself the praise of having given a milder tone to the hostile passions of our nature, and mitigated the horror of their effects !

Christianity has not annihilated the miseries of war, but it has limited their duration and their extent. It has restrained the hand of the conqueror.—“ Victory now leaves the vanquished in possession of their life, their liberty, their laws, their property*.” These formerly

* “ Nous devons au Christianisme et dans le gouvernement un certain droit politique, et dans la guerre un certain droit des gens, que la nature humaine ne saurait assez reconnaître. C'est ce droit des gens qui fait que, parmi nous, la

were numbered among the legitimate spoils of conquest. In the earlier part of our reflections we have noticed the desolating results which, in ancient times, were the inevitable attendants on military success. Previously to the advent of the Messiah, the only law acknowledged by the combatants was the right of the conqueror to exterminate the conquered. To destroy was justice; to enslave was mercy. It was a blest deliverance for the vanquished when avarice defended them from slaughter, by surrounding them with the protection of its chains.

Clemency was the crime, and destruction was the virtue, of the Pagan military character. It is enumerated by Cicero among the crimes of Verres, that he had

victoire laisse aux peuples vaincus ces grandes choses, la vie, la liberté, les loix, les biens, et toujours la religion, lorsque on ne s'a vengée pas soi-même."—*Esprit des Loix*, liv. xxiv. c. 3.

spared the life of a pirate. His reasons for considering this act of mercy as an offence is a striking illustration of the ferocity of ancient morals. “No enemy of Rome should be permitted to exist longer than was absolutely necessary. The general who obtained a triumph should grant a respite to the hostile leaders ; “ut, his per triumphum ductis, pulcherrimum spectaculum, fructumque victoriæ populus Romanus percipere possit* :” but the moment the triumphal car departed for the forum they were to be cast into prison, and delivered over to the executioner. The appalling cheapness at which the price of human life was estimated when it animated the heart of a fellow-creature, whose faction was opposite, or whose country was hostile to those of the ascendant party, is demonstrated in the cold

* CICERO *contra Verrem*.

indifference with which Tacitus lightly touches on enormities, that chill the blood of the Christian with horror and aversion as he reads. The careless notice of the historian is in painful unison with the impenetrable savageness of the actors.—A victory had been obtained over the Germans. Some of the barbarous and miserable fugitives endeavoured to conceal themselves from the violence of the Romans among the leafy branches of their native forests. They were discovered in their dangerous concealment. To destroy them,—all unarmed and defenceless as they were,—was an occasion of sport to the vacant soldiery—a kind of trivial relaxation after the severer exertions of the conflict,—“*Admotis sagittariis per ludibrium figebantur**.” A few pages afterwards, we read of a proclama-

* *Annal.*, lib. ii. c. 16.

tion, issued by Germanicus to his forces, instructing them, that “they should be insatiable of blood; that there was no necessity for encumbering themselves with captives; and that the war could only be concluded by the *utter extermination* of the people*.”—It were idle to continue these citations, which evince the habitual terrors of the ancient warfare. These are merely the examples of a constant practice, not rare and extraordinary instances of savageness. Even with those commanders who were most renowned for mercy the desolating operations were the same; and Marcellus at Syracuse, or Fabius at Tarentum, were the authorities and the precedents that made honourable so indiscriminating a massacre.

* *Annal.*, lib. ii. c. 21.—“Orabatque insisterent cædibus nil opus captivis, solam internecionem gentis finem bello fore.”

The mitigation of these barbarities was not the gradual *, but the immediate effect of Christianity. The ferocity and the mercy of the battle has fluctuated with the reception or contempt of our religion. The hostile emotions were moderated in their effects under the Christian emperors. —The example of Constantine is peculiarly striking. I translate from Naudet †. “After his first victories, Constantine

* “These Romans, who so coolly and so concisely mention these acts of *justice* which were exercised by the legions, reserve their compassion and their eloquence for their own sufferings when the provinces were invaded and desolated by the arms of the successful barbarians.”—GIBBON’S *Decline and Fall*, ch. 26. He adds in a note, “Observe with how much indifference Cæsar relates, in the *Commentaries* of the Gallic War, that he put to death the whole senate of the Veneti, who had yielded to his mercy (ch. iii. p. 16.); that he laboured to extirpate the whole nation of the Ebricones (vi. 31.); that forty thousand persons were massacred at Bourges by the just revenge of his soldiers, who spared neither age nor sex (vii. 27.),” &c.

† NAUDET sur les changemens opérés dans toutes les parties de l’administration de l’empire Romain, sous les régnes de Diocletian, &c.—Quoted by Menais, vol. i. p. 425.

delivered over the hostile chiefs whom he had made his prisoners to be destroyed by the wild beasts in the theatre ; and the Pagan panegyrists loudly celebrated this barbarous sacrifice.—They delighted themselves in expatiating on the triumph in which an emperor added the slaughter of his enemies, to heighten the magnificence of the public spectacles. After the light of revelation had dawned upon his soul, an orator again enlarged upon the same victories ; but he no longer dwelt upon the punishments of the conquered.—These things, which had formed so gratifying a theme to the haughty feelings of the Pagan prince, were abhorrent from the gentler sentiments of the Christian monarch. He had now learnt other lessons ; and, actuated by higher principles, he had endeavoured to alleviate the terrors of the conflict, by offer-

ing a pecuniary reward to every soldier who should save the life of an enemy.”

While these were the mercies of the Christian emperor, the virtues of the Gospel no sooner became desecrated in the minds of men under Julian the apostate, than the natural cruelty of the human heart, unmitigated by religious influence, recovered its severe ascendancy, and revived all the original malignity of the conflict. Gibbon does not deny—though his language skilfully disguises—the inhumanity of his favourite hero. There cannot be a more impressive contrast between the opposite effects of Paganism and Christianity, of philosophy and revelation, than that which he has unintentionally displayed in the twenty-fourth and the thirty-first chapters of his History. On the one hand we are presented with the march of Julian, the

literary, the enlightened, the philosophic prince, proceeding on his Asiatic invasion, amid all the horrors of burning cities and depopulated fields and slaughtered nations ; on the other, we are presented with the advance of Alaric the rude, Gothic soldier, unacquainted with letters, humanized only by the simple lessons of the Redeemer, marching upon the capital of the world with the least possible severity ; and, as he moves along the Flaminian way, despatching the bishops of the several towns of Italy as the bearers of conciliatory offers, and conjuring the infatuated Honorius that he would protect the capital from those inevitable calamities which defeat the precautions, and baffle the authority, of the commander.

Even on the third time of his arriving before the walls of Rome, after it had

twice experienced the clemency of the conqueror, and all his moderate proposals of peace had been eluded or rejected, Alaric offered to the astonished inhabitants an example of military mercy, that put to shame the sanguinary triumphs of their heroes. While the barbarians were on the point of entering the eternal—but the conquered—city, and the inhabitants awaited in trembling expectation to receive from the invader that sentence of extermination which, in the plenitude of their power, they had so often dealt towards the victims of their own arms, two successive proclamations were issued to the soldiery. The first declared, that the life of every individual should be considered sacred who sought refuge within the walls of any Christian sanctuary. The second was designed to moderate the wantonness of slaughter amid the avidity

for plunder*. That these unaccustomed acts of clemency were at the time considered as the effects of the religious opinions of the conqueror may be known by the contemporary sarcasms of the opponents of the Gospel. With a strange ingratitude they derived an argument against the truth of the Redeemer, from the very mercy that had preserved them†. They declared, that to save an enemy was an act unworthy of the Divinity; and that the equal safety which was experienced by the Pagan and the Christian, marked a deficiency either of the intelligence or of the power of our God

* OROSIUS. *Hist.* lib. vii. ch. 39.

† Nothing can be so partial and unjust as Gibbon's manner of relating the conduct of Alaric.—All his noble moderation, his forbearance, his desire of peace, are degraded into cunning, hypocrisy, and a sense of weakness—without any imaginable authority for such insinuations—by the artful substitution of injurious for honourable epithets.

—either of intelligence to distinguish, or of power to enforce distinction.

This lenity has not been a transitory result of our religion. As the nations of modern Europe became gradually subjected to the direction of the faith, their political contests lost gradually more and more of their rigour and their duration. They had become united by a sympathy of religious hopes and fears and sentiments, which preserved the natural rights of humanity inviolate amid the wild oblivion of the combat, and the reckless intoxication of success. This alleviation of the severity of the hostile passions had existed for ages among us; and he who was the bravest in the fight had made it his glory and his distinction to be the mildest in the victory; when yet again, with the wars of infidel and revolutionary France, the military character

recovered all its savageness. Again the battle “palled itself in the dunnest smoke of hell;” again the sword of the conqueror delighted in the wantonness and riot of destruction; and again the conquered acknowledged in the lasting oppression which subdued them, that no Christian hand was the unwilling instrument of their distress.

At length, galled beyond endurance by the oppression of the iron yoke, to which they were subjected, the impoverished and insulted nations awakened from the motionless despair that had appeared to usurp their force and paralyze their energies. Firm in their Christian strength, and united by a Christian compact, they armed themselves against the foe to the happiness of man:—they fought:—they conquered: they entered the precincts of their common enemy:—they were the

masters of the destiny of the oppressor :—they looked down, from the heights about the city, upon that gorgeous Babylon which had been enriched by the extorted wealth of their treasuries, and ornamented by the collected spoil of all that was most exquisite and rare among the decorations of their temples and their palaces :—they held the very captain as their prisoner, whose successful and unparalleled atrocities had appalled and conquered and constrained them :—and, while every human passion solicited an awful and enduring vengeance ; while every human principle would have persuaded an exact and rigorous reprisal, the morals of Christianity prevailed above the natural dictates of the heart ;—no fields were wasted ;—no city was destroyed ;—no penalty was exacted from the fallen ;—the merciless received no

other chastisement than mercy. — The proud, who had so loudly vaunted the extension of the ruin which he had wrought, was afflicted with no other retribution from the injured than the silent and the gloomy consciousness of humiliated pride.

The miseries of war have afforded to the whole race of infidel philosophers a favourite and exhaustless subject of declamation; and never have its effects been more general or destructive than in the age when the pretended philanthropists most vehemently expatiated on its injustice. Christianity does not declaim; — it exhorts to peace; it declares the precepts by which the causes of discord are removed; and, when the people are compelled to arms, it enjoins humanity to the conqueror, as the paramount and the indispensable law of the combat. — “*La religion pénètre jusque dans les camps*

pour en bannir la haine et l'inexorable cupidité, pour arrêter l'abus de la force, pour attendrir la victoire, et pour couvrir le faible de son inviolable protection. Ne pouvant retenir le glaive, elle en émousse la pointe, et verse encore du baume sur les blessures qu'il a faites*."

* MENAIS, vol. i. p. 425.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE
CONNEXION
OF
CHRISTIANITY
WITH
HUMAN HAPPINESS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BOYLE LECTURES
FOR THE YEAR 1821.

BY
THE REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, A.M.
OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXIII.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland-court.

ADVERTISEMENT.

By the will of the Honourable Robert Boyle,
—a person whose memory will never cease to
be loved and respected by his countrymen,
—it was provided, that “ an annual salary
“ should be settled on some divine, or preach-
“ ing minister, who should be enjoined to
“ perform the following offices :—1. To preach
“ eight sermons in the year, for proving
“ the Christian Religion against notorious
“ infidels; *viz.*, Atheists, Deists, Pagans,
“ Jews, and Mahometans; not descending
“ to any controversies that are among Chris-
“ tians themselves: the lecture to be on the
“ first Monday of the respective months of
“ January, February, March, April, May,
“ September, October, November; in such

“ church as the trustees shall from time to
 “ time appoint.—2. To be assisting to all
 “ companies, and encouraging them in any
 “ undertaking for propagating the Christian
 “ religion.—3. To be ready to satisfy such
 “ real scruples as any may have concern-
 “ ing those matters ; and to answer such
 “ new objections or difficulties as may be
 “ started, to which good answers have not
 “ yet been made.”

A large portion of the subsequent pages was delivered in a series of sermons, at the church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, in fulfilling the duties which are attached to the Boyle Lectureship by the will of the founder.—In preparing the MS. for the press, so many alterations, both of addition and omission, were adopted, that the work imperceptibly acquired another character ; and it became necessary to dispense with the original divisions. My design has been of a general

nature ; to prove the necessity of the Christian revelation, rather than to disprove any particular mode of unbelief. It is the practice of the modern school of infidelity and licentiousness to portray religion as the enemy of man. In my present attempt to execute the intentions of the learned and pious and amiable Robert Boyle, I have endeavoured to exhibit the fallacy of so unjust and wicked a representation ; and to demonstrate, on the contrary, that an inseparable connexion subsists between the reverence of the Gospel and the happiness of man. It has been my aim to embody my reflections in a form that might not deter the young or intimidate the indolent reader from following my course of thought.—It has been my wish to give a popular interest to a subject of universal and everlasting importance.—If my efforts should not prove successful, I trust that the candid will ascribe my failure to a

want of the requisite ability, and a miscalculation of the means, by which so desirable an object is to be accomplished, and not to any deficiency of ardour in the cause, or of diligence in its execution.

TO

The Most Reverend Father in God

EDWARD, LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK;

The Most Noble

WILLIAM SPENSER, DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE;

The Right Honourable

LORD GEORGE HENRY CAVENDISH;

AND

The Right Reverend Father in God

JAMES, LORD BISHOP OF LICHFIELD AND COVENTRY;

THE TRUSTEES

FOR

THE LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE HONOURABLE ROBERT BOYLE,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE HUMBLY AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

THE
CONNEXION OF CHRISTIANITY
WITH
HUMAN HAPPINESS.

VOL. II.

B

CHAPTER I.

Sect. VI.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE HAPPINESS OF PRIVATE LIFE.

“SUPPOSE,” says Hume*, “the same number of men, that are at present in Great Britain, with the same soil and climate; I ask, is it not possible for them to be happier, by the most perfect way of life that can be imagined, and by the greatest reformation that Omnipotence itself could work in their temper and disposition?—To assert that they cannot appears evidently ridiculous. As the land is able to maintain more than all its present inhabitants, they could never, in such a Uto-

* *Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

pian state, feel any other ills than those which arise from bodily sickness: and these are not the half of human miseries. All other ills spring from vice, either in ourselves or others; and even many of our diseases proceed from the same origin. Remove the vices and the ills will follow.”—Now it is self-evident, that the entire predominance of the principles of the Gospel would produce that very amelioration in our human condition, which the great sceptical philosopher considers necessary to the security of our earthly happiness. The vices would be removed and the calamities would follow. “A reformation in temper and disposition” would be effected by the grace of God, if we all piously availed ourselves of those means and instruments of spiritual improvement which have been mercifully placed within our reach; and we should

follow “the most perfect way of life that can be imagined,” if under the influence of Christian love, which “worketh no ill to his neighbour, and is the fulfilling of the law*,” we universally endeavoured to perform the simple precept of the Redeemer, which enjoins, that “as we would that men should do unto us, so we likewise should do unto them†.”—If it were demanded of us to prescribe the rules by which the conduct of our fellow-creatures should be regulated towards ourselves, what system could we invent that should more effectually smooth our rugged passage from the cradle to the grave than that timidity in offending, that affectionate interest in our success, that lenity of judgment and rebuke, that alacrity to aid, to warn, to counsel, and to relieve, which are appointed as indispensable to the

* Romans, ch. xiii. v. 10. † St. Luke, ch. vi. v. 30.

profession of the Gospel? “ They,” says Hooker*, “ who commend so much the felicity of that innocent world, wherein it is said, that men of their own accord did embrace fidelity and honesty, not for fear of the magistrate, or because revenge was before their eyes, if at any time they should do otherwise; but that which held the people in awe was the shame of ill-doing, the love of equity and right itself, a bar against all oppressions which greatness of power causeth; they which describe unto us any such estate of happiness amongst men, though they speak not of religion, do notwithstanding declare that which is in truth only her working. For, if religion did possess sincerely and sufficiently the hearts of all men, there would be no need of any other restraint from evil.”

* HOOKER's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol. ii. p. 9.

Though Christianity has not effected all that it has the power of effecting for our happiness, if mankind would piously submit to its instructions, and co-operate with the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, who has promised to assist them in their obedience :—though the influence of Christianity has been impeded by the corruptions of the human heart, still the moral regeneration of the world has been continually advancing by its means. The passions appear to have become less irresistible in their nature ; great and appalling crimes are more rare in their occurrence ; the mild virtues have been rendered honourable ; the benevolent affections have been recommended and enforced ; and, in compliance with popular opinion, their effects are imitated by those whose hearts are insensible to their impressions.—Any one who feels an interest

in discovering how much the religion of the Messiah has accomplished for the happiness of mankind, should cast his eyes upon the picture, which has been delivered by St. Paul, of the state of society in his own days, in the most polished and enlightened period of the heathen world, when the public mind had been cultivated by the speculations of the greatest philosophers, and refined by the writings of the most gifted poets; and then compare the description of the apostle* with that improved condition of morals and of manners, which has been achieved among the nations of Christendom, and which is every where proportionate to the purity of the national church and the sincerity of the national faith.

But it may perhaps savour of partiality

* Romans, ch. i. ver. 26 to 32.

to rely wholly on the authority of our own Scriptures for the vices and the impurities of the ancient world, or to estimate the moral benefits which the Gospel has conferred, by the representations of St. Paul, whose enthusiasm in the cause of virtue, by inspiring him with an exaggerated enmity against sin, may be thought to have communicated to his description some of the severe and bitter characters of a satiric indignation. We will address ourselves, therefore, to other sources, to demonstrate the superior purity of Christian to heathen times.—Hume shews in his Dialogue, that “an ATHE-
NIAN MAN OF MERIT might be such a one as with us would pass for incestuous, a parricide, an assassin, an ungrateful, perjured traitor, and something else too abominable to be named ; not to mention his rusticity and ill-manners. And having

lived in this manner, his death might be entirely suitable : he might conclude the scene by a desperate act of self-murder, and die with the most absurd blasphemies in his mouth. And, notwithstanding all this, he shall have statues erected to his memory ; poems and orations shall be composed in his praise ; great sects shall be proud of calling themselves by his name ; and the most distant posterity shall blindly continue their admiration. Though were such a one to arise among themselves, they would justly regard him with horror and execration*.”—Such is Hume’s account of a virtuous Athenian ; and to shew that the Romans, even in their most high and palmy state, were possessed of no superiority of sentiment or of conduct, I shall briefly recapitulate a few of those ordinary circumstances of

* HUME’S *Essays*—Dialogue, vol. ii. p. 303.

their private lives, which would have oppressed the heart of the disciple of the Saviour, whom I shall imagine as finding himself suddenly transported from the presence of the gentle manners and principles inculcated by the Gospel, to the heart of the capital of the world, in the times immediately subsequent to the promulgation of our faith.

The door of the house in which he is received, to the distress of every Christian sentiment, is opened by a chained slave*. He is conducted to the master of the house, who is at supper, and is invited to take a place at the banquet. Instead of the liberal equality which has been introduced by the general prevalence of the Christian disposition, and which has smoothed the irregularities of society, and rendered persons of a more distinguished

* OVID. *Amor.* lib. i. cap. 6.

opulence and rank attentive to the sensibilities of the poorer and more humble members of their society ; he finds the inferior guests studiously reminded of their subordinate condition, removed to a distance from the luxurious table of the master of the feast, and insulted by the offensive coarseness of their entertainment*.—During a scene of the grossest gluttony and intemperance, he is oppressed, as the spirits of the party become elevated, by the most appalling licentiousness of conversation. A father speaks of the difficulty he had found in persuading his wife to the murder of their new-born infant†. The young men boast of their successful rapes‡, their perilous adulteries, or their unnatural attachments. Disgusted with these appalling circum-

* JUVENAL, 5th Satire.

† 'TERENCE, *Heaut.*, Act III. Scene 4.

‡ lb. *Eun.*, Act III. Scene 5.

stances, the Christian visitor might omit remarking on the unbridled sensuality with which his new companions surrender themselves to the protracted pleasures of the table*, as if to eat were the first privilege of existence, and they had artificially increased their appetites, that they might lengthen their capacity of indulgence. Wearied of such society, he retires to his chamber, but not to rest; for his repose is broken by the noise of whips and lashes, and the cries of the chastised slaves, whom the master of some neighbouring mansion is rigorously cor-

* To prevent the bad effects of repletion, some used, after supper, to take a vomit: thus Cæsar (*accubuit μετρυκην agebat, i. e., post cœnam vomere volebat, ideoque largius edebat*). CICERO, *Att.* 13. 52. DEJOT. 7. Also before supper and at other times, SÜET. *Vit.* 13. CIC. *Phil.* 41. *vomunt, ut edant; edunt, ut vomant*, SENECA. *ad Helv.* 9. Even women, after bathing before supper, used to drink wine and throw it up again to sharpen their appetite. JUVENAL, 6. 427.

recting*.—In the morning he prepares to accompany his host to the exhibitions of the Circus. As they are departing from the house, an aged and half-starved slave timidly endeavours to elude their observation; he is detected; his master notices his infirmities, and orders that he should no longer be retained as an unprofitable expense and incumbrance to his household, but should be exposed to die of starvation, in recompense for the labours of his youth. On their way to the theatre, they pass a company of Patrician youth, one of whom is on the

* Seneca mentions, Epistle 122, that, regularly about the third hour of the night, the neighbours of one, who indulges the false refinement of changing night into day, hear the noise of whips and lashes; and, upon inquiry, find that he is then taking an account of the conduct of his servants, and giving them due correction.—This is not remarked as an instance of cruelty, but only of disorder, which, even in actions the most usual and methodical, changes the fixed hours that established custom had assigned for them.

point of exhibiting his dexterity in the use of the broad-sword. A poor wretch, suffering from the deep afflictions of domestic misery, has been bribed, by the offer of a few minæ, to devote himself as the victim of the barbarous experiment, on condition that the necessities of his family should be relieved by the stipulated purchase-money of his murder*.—On their arrival at the Coliseum, they find a difficulty in securing situations.—Nearly forty thousand persons are already impatiently assembled. It is a day of extraordinary expectation. Many celebrated gladiators are to be brought on the arena. It is anticipated that some

* Ephorion de Chalcide raconte (*Apud Athen.*, lib. iv.) que chez les Romains, on proposait quelquefois cinq mines de récompense à celui qui voudrait souffrir qu'on lui tranchât la tête, en sorte que la somme offerte devait être touchée par les héritiers ; et souvent, ajoute le même auteur, plusieurs concurrens se disputaient la mort à ce prix.—MÉNAIS, vol. i. p. 380.

hundreds will be slaughtered in the various conflicts which are appointed to succeed each other in the progress of the entertainment; but a more than usual curiosity and interest is excited for those contests, in which the ill-fated wretches are to be exposed in opposition to the wild beasts of the desert or the forest, as on this occasion the lions and the panthers have been fed on human flesh, for the purpose of sharpening their thirst of blood, and stimulating the keenness of their ferocity*. Unable to sustain the sight,—while the first victim is expiring, unpitied and unregarded, amid the thunders of acclamation that reward the exertions of his competitor,—the Christian visitor of the heathen capital hastily withdraws himself from the scene of sanguinary festival. He is immediately fol-

* This was done by Caligula.

lowed by his host, who ridicules his compassion on the authority of the most approved philosophers, and interrupts his eloquent lamentations over the departure of the ancient virtue and simplicity of the Roman character, by assurances, that the people have not degenerated; that vice may have varied in its form, but not increased in magnitude; that its ratio has been permanent and equal; and that whatever enormities may have been engendered of power and luxury and refinement, at all events those ruder ages could never be deserving of regret, during which a supposed pestilence, that appeared to be depopulating the city, was discovered to be effected by the prevalency of the art of poisoning* ;—a prac-

* LIVY, viii. 18. One hundred and seventy women, among whom were some of the highest rank, were condemned for this crime.

tice which was so accordant to the morals and sentiments of the people, that the prætor, in a single province, after having capitally punished three thousand persons for the offence, still complained of the increasing number of the accusations*.

In the above sketch of the private morals of the ancient Romans, I have studiously cast a veil over that horrible and undisguised impurity which saturated the whole body of society ; which haunted the precincts of their temples ; which mingled with their religious rites and festivals ; which so frequently made the subject of their conversation and their poetry ; which addressed the grossness of the public mind in the signs exhibited in their streets, and in the monuments that defiled their gardens, and of which the

* LIVY, lib. xl. cap. 43.

images were constantly before the eyes, to pollute and to debase the soul, engraved on the common utensils of daily existence, on their lamps and their vases and their drinking vessels.—That an improvement has been wrought on the moral condition of the nations of Europe it is impossible to controvert, neither do I comprehend how that improvement can be attributed to any other cause than the religion promulgated by the Messiah. All that philosophy could do had been tried, and the experiment had failed.—We hear of the early apologists of Christianity enlarging on the purifying powers of the faith ; of Tertullian * challenging his opponents to produce from the overflowing prisons of the empire a single disciple of the Saviour, who was guilty of any other

* Quoted by Tillotson, Sermon xx. vol. 2., folio edition of his Works.

accusation than that of his belief; of Bardasanes* asserting the efficacy of the Gospel in exalting its disciples above those corruptions of sentiment and conduct which had been most intimately interwoven with the habits of their lives, and authorized by the institutions of their country. But we encounter no such eulo-

* The passage from Bardasanes of Mesopotamia is preserved by Eusebius; and as it is interesting, from the character it offers of the manners of the primitive Christians, I quote it in the words of Milner's translation. *Church History*, vol. i. p. 253.—“ In Parthia polygamy is allowed and practised, but the Christians of Parthia practise it not. In Persia the same may be said with respect to incest. In Bactria and in Gaul the rites of matrimony are defiled with impunity. The Christians there act not thus. In truth, wherever they reside, they triumph in their practice over the worst of laws, and the worst of customs.”—To these ancient testimonies in favour of the superior excellence of the faith, we may add the modern testimony of Voltaire, who tells us in his *Correspondence*, that “ Stoicism produced but one Epictetus; and Christianity forms thousands of such philosophers, who know not that they are so, and who carry their virtue to such a length, as to be ignorant that they possess any.”—*Cor. Gen.* iii. 222.

gies on the merits of philosophy; its benefits are as visionary as its principles. We have the authority of Cicero*, of Diodorus, of Quintilian†, and of Seneca‡, for asserting, that its cold and motiveless and unsanctioned lessons were incapable of producing any extensive or sensible effect on the dispositions of the people:— and that they were very seldom of any efficacy in restraining the vices of their instructors themselves. However eloquently the philosopher might declaim on the beauty of virtue and the deformity of

* *Tusc. Dis.* ii. 4. “Sed hæc eadem num censes apud eos ipsos valere nisi admodum paucos; a quibus inventa, disputata, conscripta sunt? Quotus enim quisque philosophorum invenitur, qui sit ita moratus, ita animo ac vita constitutus, ut ratio postulat? qui disciplinam suam non ostentationem scientiæ, sed legem vitæ putet? qui obtemperet ipse sibi, et decretis suis pareat?”

Τῶν καὶ ἡμᾶς φιλοσόφων τὰς πλείους ἰδεῖν ἐστὶ λέγοντας μὲν τὰ κάλλιστα, πράττοντας δὲ τὰ χείριστα. *In Excerpt. Prirese.* p. 234.

† *Inst. Orat.* lib. i. *Proæm.*

‡ *Epist.* 20.

vice ; however skilfully he might prescribe the limits of human duty, his arguments had no other operation than to delight for a little while by the music of the periods with which they were evolved, or by the grace and propriety of the illustrations with which they were recommended and enforced.—This was the extent of his ability ; and this perhaps was all that he designed.—His instructions never were received as the rules of life and principles of action, because they were not connected with any religious sanctions which might address them to the affections of mankind, and interest their hopes and fears in the cause of their obedience.

This want has been supplied by the wisdom of the Saviour. He has not permitted that the sublime morality of his religion should be as superfluous to the

reformation of the world as the unsupported maxims of Socrates or of Cicero. If he has communicated to us a law which would secure the happiness of society in a degree commensurate with our submission to his injunctions, he has advanced, in the belief of an Omnipresent Deity, who will hereafter recompense our actions by a correspondent retribution of good or evil, the most animating inducements to obedience. As man is a reasonable being, and actuated to perform or to forbear by the anticipation of emolument or loss, the Gospel addresses his understanding with motives to dissuade from crime, and stimulate to virtue, which appeal to the universal instincts of human nature; which, from their infinite and eternal character, can be counterbalanced by no other suggestions; and which must

constrain the conduct in proportion to the distinctness of our faith*.

This is one of the points on which the unbeliever and the Christian appear to be agreed. Nearly all the great leading infidel authorities attach the highest value to a popular belief in a future state of retribution. This doctrine constituted one of the five articles of Lord Herbert's Universal Creed†. "Without the hopes of another life," says Bayle‡, "virtue and innocence may be ranked among those things over which Solomon has pronounced the denunciation of vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." Lord Bo-

* It was said by Dr. Johnson, "that the most licentious man living would subdue his passions in the presence of temptation if hell were open before him."—BOSWELL'S *Life*, vol. iv. p. 120. To those who live by faith, heaven and hell are open before them.

† LELAND'S *Deistical Writers*.

‡ *Dictionnaire*, Art. Brutus.

lingbroke * declares, “ that the rewards and punishments of a future state have so great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and restrain the vices of man, that reason, which cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it on principles of good policy.” Whatever liberty of faith and conscience the infidel may arrogate to himself, there is not one, beyond the miserable band, who make a traffic of the doctrines of despair, who does not tremble at the idea of admitting the mass of his fellow-creatures to the wide immunities of his ungodliness. However he may have himself succeeded in erasing from his mind the impressions of Christianity, in withdrawing his heart from its convictions, in adopting his passions as his

* Vol. v. p. 322.

infallible counsellors, and his senses as the sovereign arbiters of their own indulgence. However the scoffer of these latter days may assume for himself an exemption from those religious inducements, which operate with others, he has seldom shewn himself solicitous to extend the perilous enfranchisement of his philosophy to those, who are connected with his happiness by any of the nearer charities, or more intimate relations of existence. If his light be the light of truth, his own experience can instruct him, that it is possessed of qualities threatening in their aspect, and destructive in their contact ; that it may burn more than it can comfort, and he dreads its too general dissemination. He has learnt to contemn, as prejudices, the instructions of the Gospel, but he can estimate their utility,

and agrees with Diderot*, “ that some such prejudices are indispensable to mankind.” He perceives that it is the attachment of a religious importance to our actions, which gives to virtue its consecration and to vice its opprobrium. He acknowledges, that without the persuasion of an eternal consequence, the most noble sacrifices and generous acts of self-devotion would be succeeded by no permanent sense of gratifying reflection ; that the most dark abominations of the guilty would be visited by no compunctions more enduring than the terrors of detection†. He regards the conception of a remunerating and avenging God as an effective accessory to the

* Il faut sans doute des préjuges aux hommes.—*Cor. de GRIMM et DIDEROT*, vol. v. p. 8.

† Il n’y a d’autres remords que la crainte du supplice. This maxim, so necessary a consequent of infidelity, is extracted from Helvetius.

education of his child ; as a constant guard upon his absent obedience, as an additional excitement to his present exertions. He feels that faith is the most bright accomplishment of the female character, and the most firm and liberal protection for the purity of his home*. He knows that in the busy intercourse of life, a sympathy in the same religious hopes and fears is the silent preliminary to every negotiation, the stability of every bond, the confirmation of every compact, the sanction of every testimony, the source of fidelity, of honesty, and confidence ; and, like Voltaire †, he

* It would be difficult to name an instance of a virtuous female infidel. Chastity is peculiarly a religious virtue, and all the examples of female unbelief, that I have read, or heard of, have been notorious for sacrificing the purity of the morals of the Gospel, when they abandoned the belief of its retributions.

† Voltaire's confidential agent was a Jansenist and a priest. The second circumstance to which I allude is very

would seek a Christian as the most secure depositary of every trust ; and, like him, he would impose a timid silence on the blaspheming converse of the associates of his unbelief ; lest his domestics become attainted by the contagion of their principles, and murder him as he sleeps.

There is an unimaginable inconsistency in the conduct of the chief apostles of infidelity. While they agree with the heathen philosopher*, or the Christian divine, in admitting, that no man can be steadily virtuous unless he live under the continual remembrance of an immortal destination ; they delight in shew-

commonly related. Among other places, in which it may be found, is Abernethy's Lectures in answer to Lawrence.

* *Plato de Legibus*. Rousseau was of the same opinion. “ Je n'entends pas que l'on puisse être vertueux sans religion. J'eus long-temps cette opinion trompeuse, dont je suis bien desabusé.—*Lettre sur les Spectacles*.

ing, that every human argument is insufficient for the foundation of so elevated a trust. While they acknowledge that this necessary belief must ever rest upon religious impressions for its strength and efficacy ; they exhaust every engine of sophistry or ridicule, in endeavouring to eradicate a faith, which establishes this sacred truth as the paramount object of its announcements, and which, by the public and attested resurrection of its author, has left the immortality of the soul no longer a subject of variable and inconclusive speculation, but a demonstrable fact and an historic certainty. While they confess, that whoever impairs the stability of such sentiments, would deserve the execration of his fellow-creatures ; they rush forward to volunteer the ignominy, which they have themselves denounced against the preach-

ers of annihilation. While they assert the importance of the faith to the regulation of human conduct ; they labour to demonstrate its insignificance, by ostentatiously comparing the virtues of a few professed infidels with the vices of some of the nominal disciples of Christianity.

I should not have delayed any longer upon this head, had it not been with an intention of offering a few remarks, to shew the futility of those arguments by which the unbeliever strives to invalidate his own admissions.

There are several* who would persuade us to yield no credit to their assertions, when they speak of the support which vir-

* Pomponatius, Cardan, Bayle, are named by Bishop Warburton as the three great assertors of the non-importance of religious faith ; and the opinion is now very prevalent.

tue derives from the belief in a future state of rewards and punishments, because they tell us a few solitary individuals have passed honourably through life, without any such preternatural dependance.— With regard to these vaunted instances of morality, independent of religion, who are represented as moved by a disinterested love of virtue, as living in unbelief as if they lived in faith, as walking in the solitudes of atheism, as if they walked in the continual presence of their Creator and their Judge; it is evident, that if any such examples have ever had a local habitation and a name, their good must have originated in some rare peculiarity of character, and not in the inducements of their infidelity. We know that in ordinary life, the passions are predominant over the reason; that the reason can only acquire and maintain its

ascendency by the aid of accumulated motive ; that, however weak may be the faith in the retributions of eternity, and faith admits of every gradation, from the slightest suspicion to the most complete assurance, still even a suspicion of this fact is an additional inducement to resist the evil seductions of the heart ; that if others, possessing all the human dissuatives from transgression, which are attainable to the unbeliever, with a superior religious argument, from which he is excluded, are overpowered by the temptations that assault them, while he remains invincible, his firmness can only be attributed to some rare endowment, or extraordinary deficiency of nature ;—to the supernatural force of his understanding, or the adamantyne frigidness of his temperament.

But is it true that any such instances of

infidel virtue have existed? Where are the scenes which their benevolence has cheered? Where are the charitable endowments and the great works of public utility, which they have left to indemnify posterity for the traditionary evil of their instructions? In the earlier ages of the world we know that there was no such unintelligible division between the principle and its consequences. The best were ever those who had the most secure dependance on an eternal destination. Socrates was most celebrated by the heathen world, for wisdom and for virtue; and he expired, while endeavouring to animate the mourners of his fate with the prospects of immortality. Scipio is represented as declaring, that he was the more vigilant in the career of honour from anticipating heaven as his reward*.

* *Somnium Scipionis*.—CICERO.

Cato is described as acknowledging, that he should never have undergone his patriotic labours in the service of his country, had he not conceived the conclusion of this life to be succeeded by the commencement of a brighter being *.

If the persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and a future retribution, has thus been followed by superior excellence of individual virtue, this leading article of religious faith has never been generally discredited by any sect or nation, without producing a proportionate deterioration of character. Previously to the Gospel revelation, we are distinctly acquainted with two sects of considerable importance and duration, who had rent asunder those invisible alliances by which man is united to his Maker; who

* CICERO *de Senectute*.

had placed the tomb as the boundary of their spiritual vision; and who refused to find in this their transitory dwelling any connexion with an imperishable state. Though their authors flourished in different regions of the earth; though seas divided their disciples; though they existed amid different forms of life, and various modifications of national habit and opinion; this malignant sympathy of creed moulded them, in defiance of every subordinate contrariety, into a dark similitude of soul, and stampd them with the impress of a kindred degradation. Of the one, the votaries, by their obscene and incredible licentiousness, have debased the name of Epicurus into an everlasting epithet of reproach. Of the other, of those Sadducees, whom the Scriptures mention as denying the resur-

rection of the dead, we distinctly know on the authority of Josephus *, that their actions were correspondent to their institutes, and that they were tyrannous and sensual, perfidious and inhuman.

These instances are sufficient for the establishment of one point.—They prove that irreligion is destructive to the morals and the affections, when it has obtained any general prevalence over a sect or nation ; and when each individual may find a countenance for his excesses in the enormities of his associates. While Atheism, or Deism :—for Deism is as bad as Atheism, unless it be connected with those operative doctrines which are assured to us by revelation, and which I shall hereafter shew to be most miserably uncertain, when deprived of its convictions :—while Atheism is only the error

* JOSEPHUS, lib. ii. chap. 12. *de Bello Judaico*.

of a few scattered literary speculatists, the virtue of their lives would not at all impeach the arguments that assert the demoralizing tendency of their principles. It may be very easily comprehended that a few such men might resist the deteriorating influence of their faith, and might continue to preserve so much of that moral decency and external propriety of conduct, as would be demanded by their situation in society. They might fill their station in the world with credit and reputation.—They might “eschew evil,” but I doubt whether they would be active in “doing good.” It is not at all made out that any one of these apostates from the faith has attained to that degree of diligent and forbearing virtue, which in a Christian would appear to warrant, through the atonement of his Saviour, any happier confidence of his salvation.

But if any one or two had been thus blest and innocent in their impiety, how does it demonstrate that evil would not result from the more general diffusion of their doctrines?—Diagoras or Pliny, Vanini or Spinoza, may have lived as guiltlessly as Bayle would represent them to have lived; but what relation is there between their circumstances and their temptations, and the circumstances and the temptations of ordinary men? While they imagined the dethronement of their God, the retirement to which they withdrew themselves to contemplate, to combine and to adapt the systems of their blasphemy, removed them from those ardent competitions of the busy, by which the fires of the passions are elicited. Their parental attachment to the theories which they had invented and promulgated, would withhold them from those grosser immoralities that

might cast an opprobrium on their institutes. When they had displaced the restraints and motives of religion, and asserted that human reason was sufficient to maintain the integrity of the conduct, they would feel themselves obliged to exemplify in their lives the truth and the efficacy of their principles. But these inducements perish with the authors of each particular code of unbelief; and the moral character of the master has very seldom operated further with his followers than to afford them a miserable excuse for the adoption of the opinions by which they were depraved.

But are we not engaged in a discussion without having previously agreed upon the premises which are necessary to our arriving at any just conclusion?—Before we can speak of the virtue or the vice of the teachers and disciples of infidelity, is it

not first requisite to be informed by what scale their conduct is to be measured?—When a man professes himself a Christian, we can compare his performance with his obligations, and discern between his rule and his obedience. The Gospel affords a distinct and invariable standard by which its votaries may be censured or approved. But it is not so with the apostates from the faith; they have no common and consistent code of principles. Each is a law unto himself: and he so adapts its form that it may not too rigorously press upon the free movement of his prevalent inclinations. In the schools of infidelity all vices are not infamous.—Voltaire may live in habits of the most shameless adultery*; he may profess the greatest cordiality for the aged President

* It were impossible for charity itself to doubt the nature of his connexion with Madame du Châtelet.

Henault, and at the same time libel the old man in anonymous pamphlets* ; he may violate the most sacred duties of

* The passage alluded to was introduced in a pamphlet, entitled “ Examen de la nouvelle Histoire de Henri Quatre, de M. de Buri, par le Marquis de B.”—It was proved, almost to demonstration, to have been the production of Voltaire. Henault was upwards of eighty years old, and his friends endeavoured to conceal the malicious paragraphs from his knowledge. This would have defeated the malignity of the author,—and, says Madame du Deffand, “ Il y a six semaines, ou deux mois que le Président reçoit une lettre de Voltaire qui lui parle de cette brochure et lui transcrit l'article qui le regarde, et un autre qu'on peut appliquer à une personne bien considérable. Nous fumes bien déconcertés ; le Président ne fut point aussi troublé que nous l'appréhensions. Il fit une réponse fort sage ; Voltaire lui a écrit trois lettres depuis cette première ; il veut absolument qu'il réponde, et comme le Président persiste à ne le vouloir pas, il lui offre de répondre pour lui ; le Président y consent pourvu que Voltaire y mette son nom. Voltaire lui a d'abord dit qu'il croyait que l'auteur de cette critique était la Beaumelle ; depuis il lui a dit que c'était un Marquis de Belestad, lequel ne sait ni lire ni écrire ; ce n'est ni l'un, ni l'autre, on en est sûr ; mais savez-vous qui on soupçonne avec juste raison ? Voltaire, oui, Voltaire lui-même. C'est de cela qu'on peut dire cela est *ineffable*.—Oh ! tous les hommes sont fous ou méchants, et le plus grand nombre est l'un et l'autre. —*Lettres de MAD. DU DEFFAND*, vol. i. p. 275.

hospitality and honour by clandestinely breaking open the private letters of his guests* ; he may revenge the cause of his vanity by the invention of the most injurious calumnies against the reputation of Mademoiselle Raucourt † ; he may pander to the grossest passions of mankind by the publication of obscene poetry, after polluting his own soul by the strenuous impurity of composing it ‡ ; he may cherish the most illimitable vanity, and dare demand of his attendant sycophants

* This infamous practice is disclosed in the letters of Madame de Graigny. This breach of domestic probity seems to be a favourite vice among infidels ; and Voltaire only revenged on his unhappy and oppressed guest the wrongs of the same kind which he had himself received under the roof of Frederic the Great.—“ Le Roi ouvrait toutes mes lettres.”—*Memoires de VOLTAIRE écrits par lui même.*

† The success of Mademoiselle Raucourt was the cause of delaying for a short time the representation of one of his tragedies ; I think the “ *Lois de Minos.*”—This anecdote is related by the Baron de Grimm.

‡ I need not name the works that give an infamous celebrity to the name of Voltaire.

whether Jesus Christ* were more intellectually gifted than himself; and his adultery, his duplicity, his meanness, his dishonour, his falsehood, his slanders, his obscenities, his profaneness, shall diminish nothing from the brightness of his renown. He may still receive the incense of adulation from his cotemporaries, and be embalmed by the eulogies of successive generations of atheists, as if the single quality of his unbelief was an all-sufficient atonement for the atrocity of his conduct and the baseness of his heart.

As all vices are not infamous among the disciples of the new philosophy, neither are all virtues meritorious. There are scarcely any two of their instructors who appear to be agreed on their moral appreciation of the same human actions and affections. With many humility, loy-

* “Croyez-vous que Jésus Christ eût plus d’esprit que moi?”

alty, constancy and devotion, are no longer viewed with any sentiments of approbation. For every infringement of those rigid precepts of temperance and chastity which are respected as venerable by Christians, they are excused by the very dogmata of their philosophy, which has taught them that “no gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious*,” and granted them a dispensation from all restraints of mortification or self-denial†.”—They avowedly emancipate the will from all those stricter limits of temperance, which one of their greatest instructors has classed upon the proscribed catalogue of monkish virtues, and allow themselves a liberty of indulgence, which, in a disciple of the Redeemer, they would be among the first to visit

* HUME’S *Essay on Refinement*.

† HUME’S *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, Sec. 9.

with reproach : as far as their inclinations urge them, and the regulations and the forbearance of society will permit a scope for action, we generally find that they avail themselves of the ample privileges of irreligion ; and if they be temperate in vice, their moderation must be accounted for upon principles which are not only independent of their infidelity, but which exist with a stubborn rectitude in opposition to its demoralizing influence.

There are many transgressions from which the unbeliever would be defended, by the terror of reproach and the hazards of detection ; and as long as the ascendancy of his bad affections is thus counterbalanced and abridged, he may persevere in the steady course of duty ; but where there is neither shame or punishment to be apprehended, we have been experimentally informed that the mere,

cold, speculative estimate of the malice of an action will never be sufficient to prevent its perpetration.—It is unnecessary to revert to ancient or remote authorities to substantiate this truth. Take Hume as the example.—He is one of the most celebrated instances of modern heathen virtue ;—famous in his life, and recorded in his death *. There is a passage in his works which evinces that he was perfectly aware of the criminality of publishing the lessons that he inculcated. He makes no attempt to extenuate this wickedness, but fairly estimates the measure of his guilt ; and declares †, with reference to the great fundamental doctrine of religion, that “ those can never be considered as good citizens who would endeavour to disabuse mankind” of their

* See ADAM SMITH'S *Letter on the Death of Hume*.

† *Essay on Providence and a Future State*, vol. ii. p. 155.

expectations of a future state of retribution. With this conviction upon his mind, in opposition to his acknowledged perception of what was right, conscious, as he must have been, that his name would be authority for error, where his arguments would be perfectly unintelligible, he voluntarily commits a sin against his country, of which the effects will be as permanent as the memorials of his genius ; and, seduced by the paltry claims of his literary vanity, has inscribed this little sentence of condemnation against himself as the moral of an elaborate essay, which was designed as the annihilation of our eternal hope. Hume was, by his own confession, a bad citizen. The highest possible human motive, the love of his country, could not induce him to overcome the slight temptation of exhibiting his argumentative ingenuity, though

he distinctly apprehended the guilt of the exhibition.—But this example, which exposes the fallibility of the unsupported and disputable conclusions of mere human ethics, when adopted as the only barrier against crime, may be encountered by another, which demonstrates the potency of those principles that are derived from the Gospel, and are sanctioned by the motives of religious faith.—“ If,” said Dr. Johnson*, “ I could have

* I transcribe the whole conversation from which this sentence is taken.—“ We can have no dependance upon that instinctive, that constitutional, goodness which is not founded upon principle. I grant you that such a man may be a very amiable member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right ; and as every man prefers virtue, when there is not some incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him ; and I should certainly not trust him with young ladies, for *there* there is always temptation. Hume, and other sceptical innovators, are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity ; so they

allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired. Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote.”—Here the efficacy of those motives, which are respectively acknowledged by the Christian and the infidel, may be scanned, and measured and appreciated.—They are brought into a fair comparison.—Two persons are presented

have betaken themselves to error. Truth, Sir, is a cow, which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired. Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this, that after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum*; yet one of them must certainly be true.”—BOSWELL’S *Life of JOHN-SON*, vol. i. pp. 302, 303.

before us as engaged in the same literary career, ambitious of the same recompense, aware of the same easy opportunity of distinction, tempted to the commission of the same act, and dissuaded by the same consciousness of its offence. With the Christian, indeed, the temptation is enforced by arguments from which the infidel is delivered.—He has the *res angusta domi* to second the suggestions of his vanity, and is solicited by the urgent claims of poverty, which has so frequently seduced the most endowed among mankind to corrupt the purposes of genius, and pervert the energies of heaven to prosper the interests of hell :—but in the conflict between the desire of celebrity and the sense of duty—notwithstanding the more rigorous circumstances of his trial—we find that the Christian only is triumphant, and that the unbeliever is defeated. And

when the moral speculatist himself thus falls, in all the pride of his philosophic strength, and in defiance of its own convictions, is it to be anticipated that the large and unreflecting body of society would derive a security from ignorance, which to him was unattainable by knowledge?—It is certain that there exists an inseparable connexion between virtue and wisdom; that the voice of revelation has appointed for us a rule of action, of which experience demonstrates the perfection. But the great excellence of the Gospel is, that it does not 'condescend to any discussion on the motives and principles of conduct. It "speaks with authority and not as the scribes." It does not depend, for the influence of its morals, on any of those elaborate and subtle and complicated disquisitions, which must be unintelligible to the majority of the people,

and of which, while the arguments that condemn the sins of others are admitted without dispute, those that arraign our own are rejected by the partiality of the heart, and controverted by the deceitful sophistry of the passions.

It was said by La Harpe*, who was long the companion and the disciple of the French infidel philosophers, though he was eventually reclaimed from his impiety, that “their principles never were adopted but from the love of sin.”—And if sin be the parent of unbelief, religion may with some confidence be asserted as the unacknowledged origin of the diminished virtues of the unbeliever. The infidel is indebted to revelation for whatever of lingering merit he may possess ;

* Cette philosophie n'avait d'influence que comme ami de toutes les passions, et ennemi de tout ce qui les reprime.—*La Harpe sur l'Encyclopédie.*

to the apprehension of the laws, which in every Christian country have been modelled upon the precepts of the Gospel ; to the love and dread of popular opinion, which by the general diffusion of the Gospel has been compressed into a consistent approbation of excellence and an uniform abhorrence of iniquity ; and to some remaining sentiments of faith, which, according to the joint confession of Bayle and of Voltaire, can never be absolutely eradicated from the human heart*.

With respect to the vices which are found to pollute the external members of the Christian faith, it may very easily be shewn that they do not militate at all against the necessity and importance of

* “ Presque tous ceux qui vivent dans l'irreligion ne font que douter,” says Bayle, in his *Dictionary Art. Bion.* ; and Voltaire, in a letter to Horace Walpole, repeated the same sentiment, when he declared that for the last forty years he had done nothing but doubt.

religious sanctions for the foundation and the support of virtue. It is certainly a very melancholy subject of reflection that the sublime motives and the awful restraints, which are revealed to us by the Gospel, should maintain so divided and so circumscribed an influence upon our actions; that the majority of those by whom the lessons of the Redeemer are nominally adopted as the institutes of life, should regard his laws with a frigid estimation of their wisdom, without any ambition of accomplishing their perfection; and that the multitude should pretend to aspire to the glories of an immortality which they are continually postponing to the pleasures, or setting at stake against the perishable interests, of the world.—But that the empire of the faith should be thus partial and confined was not unnoticed by the predictions of

the Messiah. He has unequivocally pronounced, that of the “many who are called, there are few who should be chosen:” and, on a comparison of the character of the Gospel with the dispositions of mankind, a more extensive prevalence could not have been reasonably anticipated.

Man is summoned by the Gospel to do violence to those corrupt and vicious inclinations, which make a part of his unalienable birthright; to emancipate himself from the direction of those passions which appear the very principles of his existence, and supply the animation of the heart with a tide of holier impulses and more purified affections; to sacrifice the urgent claims of selfishness to the gratification of an uncontaminated benevolence; to exalt himself to a higher rank in the order of the creation; to cast aside

every low and animal propensity, and live spiritually for the service of his God; to disdain the human properties of his being, and vindicate to himself a more intimate participation of the angelic nature.—This is a task that requires of us no ordinary efforts. Its accomplishment demands the constant and undivided exertion of those faculties with which the Almighty has so pre-eminently endowed us, and is opposed by the fascinations of the earth, by the temptations of Satan, by the incitements of passion, and by the persuasions of the senses. No inducements inferior to those which are presented as the object of religious hope, in the unimaginable beatitude of the elect, would arouse the indolence of the heart to attempt its execution; neither could any assistances, inferior to those which are communicated by the graces of the

Holy Spirit, fortify the infirmity of the heart in perfecting its achievement.—If the majority, therefore, should follow the direction of their nature, and cling to earth, rather than aspire to heaven, we may lament their blindness; but it can afford no just occasion of astonishment; for we have seen them, with a similar improvidence, squander away the respectability of their manhood, and the reverence of their age, for the turbulent vices of their youth; and barter health for ignominy, and wisdom for indolence.—If others vacillate between the services of God and Mammon, and are betrayed into all the inconsistencies of a wavering faith, which is allowed to exercise an intermittent and casual control over the affections of a worldly heart; this incoherency of practice with profession is no more than might be expected from the

opposition of powerful motives, each counteracting the influence of the other, or, from time to time, acquiring a transient superiority from the co-operation of extraneous circumstances :—and, if a less imperfect and a less fluctuating ascendancy be yielded to the faith by a few only of the more devout disciples of the Saviour, this is as much as, with any reasonable confidence, could have been expected from the present conditions of our existence, and the violent elements that are mingled in the constitution of our being. But that it does possess this efficacy in peculiar instances no one can have the temerity to dispute.—No one can retrace the lives of such men as Taylor, or Wilson, or Fenelon, or Hooker ;—no one can read of the indefatigable benevolence of such men as Vincent de Paul, or Howard, or Bernard Gilpin, or

Henry Martyn ;—no one can have witnessed the incredible exertions of her active piety, who, disdaining the repulsive terrors of the prison-house, has uttered the effectual exhortations to repentance, and delivered the glad tidings of redemption amid the darkest haunts of spiritual despair ;—no one can meditate on these instances of exalted faith without acknowledging that religion is an instrument of very powerful and important operation over those by whom it is seriously and fervently embraced.—“ To assert that it is useless,” says Montesquieu, “ because it is not universally effective, were as absurd as to argue against the necessity of human laws on the plea of their frequent violation* :” and it was very justly argued by Rousseau, that the transgressions of the nominal disciples of Chris-

* *Esprit des Loix*, liv. xxiv. c. 2.

tianity “do not prove that religion is superfluous, but that very few persons are religious*.”

But never let it be forgotten, that when we speak of the limited operation of the Gospel, we speak with reference to the vastness of the instrument, and the extent of its capacities. Its effects are, in fact, incalculably great. It acts very perceptibly upon those who apostatize from the faith, or who subscribe and yet appear to sit most loosely by their profession. They dare not greatly derogate from the example of the more worthy members of society. They will strive to imitate the virtues which conciliate popular approbation. That cold belief, which is sufficient to justify the condemnation of its possessors, but is deficient in the vitality that may preserve them, acts as

* *Emile*, tom. iii. p. 199.

a barrier against many vices to which they are but lightly tempted ; and when the first ardour of a passion has been exhausted in fruition, it mingles with less sacred arguments to persuade the abandonment of its excesses. There is every variety of belief from the faintest suspicion to the most inflexible assurance of the truth ; and each individual will be obedient to the precepts of his religion, in proportion to his reliance on its certainty. As the virtues of the sceptic may be attributed to some unextirpated impressions of faith, so the vices of the Christian may be attributed to some occasional emotions of scepticism ; and for that distrust and its attendant immoralities he is presented, by the teachers of infidelity, with both the instruction and the precedent.—“ It were a sad fallacy,” says Necker, “ to represent the general decay

of the spirit of religion as an evidence that that spirit has but little influence upon human conduct. Rather ought we to remark how efficacious that power must be, which, even in the abatement of its force, forms so indispensable an accessory to the maintenance of public order !—Well should we be warranted in exclaiming : What would not the whole be worth, if the part be thus excellent in its advantages *.”

* “ On auroit tort également de nous présenter l'affoiblissement général de l'esprit religieux comme une preuve que cet esprit a, de nos jours, très-peu d'influence sur la morale ; il faudroit plutôt remarquer combien ne doit pas être efficace une puissance qui, dans la dégradation même de ses forces est encore suffisante pour concourir au maintien de l'ordre public ; on seroit autorisé à dire : que ne vaut pas le tout, si l'on reçoit tant d'avantage d'une simple partie ? ” — *De l'Importance des Opinions Religieuses*, par M. NECKER.

CHAPTER I.

Sect. VII.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
HAPPINESS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

ON a survey of the precepts and the institutions which have been consecrated by the diffusion of the Gospel, and on a comparison of the advantages which they have severally communicated to the regenerated nations of the earth, it might be difficult to particularize any single object, for the possession of which the gratitude of man is more peculiarly due. But if there be any one of the lessons of the divine intelligence which has more favourably operated than another to ameliorate the condition of the social world,

and to promote and to confirm its happiness, it is that which has restored the legitimate equality of the sexes, vindicated the weakness of woman from the tyranny of man, and revived one of the first original laws of our Creator, by insisting on the inviolable sanctity of the marriage-bond.

By rendering every violation of the nuptial tie obnoxious to the judgment of the Almighty ; by denying to his disciples all possibility of a divided union ; by suppressing every facility of divorce ; by casting his injunctions even on the vagrancy of the desires—on the wandering eye and the licentious inclination—the Messiah has displayed his consummate knowledge of the properties of that heart, into which himself had breathed the spirit of existence. He has cut away from the human soul the vain emotions, and the

exhausting exuberances of passion, that it may bear the profitable fruit of the affections*. He has dispossessed the habitations of his disciples of the inflictions of those evil spirits that exercise a violent dominion in the dwellings of the ungodly. He has emancipated woman from the oppression of distrust and the apprehensions of desertion. He has delivered man from the agitations of jealousy, and afforded him, with the security of his tenderest interests, that calm of mind and complacency of heart, which is most favourable to the prosecution of enterprise, the advancement of intellect, and the cultivation of virtue. He has concentrated the affections, that they might become the sacred and enduring

* “ ‘The heart of man naturally submits to necessity, and soon loses an inclination when there appears an absolute impossibility of gratifying it.’—HUME’S *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce*.

motives to exertion. He has converted those very desires into instruments of strength, which, in their original state of turbulence and mutability, act as the impediments to perseverance, and prove the unprofitable channels by which the energies of the soul are wasted and dispersed. —And while, by thus insisting on their inseparable union, the Messiah has wrought for the happiness of the parents, he has prepared an asylum for the reception of the infant, and secured to him the permanent support of the authors of his being, which had otherwise been as precarious as the caprice, and as frail as the corruption of their nature. A home is thus created for the child, where his wants are the claims for tenderness, and his weakness is the guarantee for protection; where every error is leniently rebuked, every little merit partially regarded, every light at-

tainment uninviciously approved ; where every early sorrow finds the ready sympathy of a sister's tears, and every school-boy wrong is answered from some elder brother's arm with the immediate redress ; where the heart, educated at the foot of the affections, is refined by the intercourse of female gentleness, and fortified by the example of the manly virtues ; where in the centre of relatives and friends the youth grows up beneath the cheering influence of those domestic charities, which, co-existent with the dawn of being, create his safety and his happiness on earth, and, imperishable as the immortal spirit, appear to promise in the re-union beyond the grave no inferior part of the beatitude of heaven.

That the perfect developement of those invaluable affections, which unite to form the happiness of the Christian's home, is

unattainable under any combinations of society which do not rigorously insist on the inviolability of the marriage-vow, may be demonstrated by the experience of those nations in which the permission of polygamy, or the facility of divorce, has allowed a scope to the licentiousness of passion. Public morals have never been attained by either of these vices but the destruction of domestic happiness has been the invariable result.

Wherever polygamy maintains, the degradation of the female sex must necessarily ensue. The husband becomes elevated into the master and the tyrant. In the multiplicity of objects all the attributes of love are lost, except its watchfulness and its suspicion. The mingled and the countless progeny of many mothers are mutually severed by the opposition of their rival parents. Brethren are more exasperated against each other by

maternal jealousies, than they are united by the blood of their common father:—while that lordly sire, disdaining his paternal duties, abandons his promiscuous offspring to the care of slaves and mercenaries, and considers all the offices of his divided tenderness sufficiently performed when he has once stored his memory with the catalogue of their names*.

If these are the miserable consequences of permitting a participation of the marriage-bed, the other mode of violation by which the nuptial institution is opposed—the allowing the possibility of capricious and voluntary divorce—is, perhaps, even more destructive to the existence of the domestic affections. It kills where the other only wounds. It concludes in the extirpation of the rite. It tends to eradicate all

* “Barbarism appears from reason as well as experience to be the inseparable attendant of polygamy.”—HUME’S *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce*.

family connexion. “On this point,” says Hume, “no one will pretend to refuse the testimony of experience. At the time when divorces were most frequent among the Romans, marriages were most rare; and Augustus was obliged, by penal laws, to force men of fashion into the marriage state:—a circumstance which is scarcely to be found in any other age or nation*.”

But if there be no other basis on which the fair fabric of our domestic happiness can be raised than that of the unity and the sacredness of the nuptial bond, it may also be asserted, on the authority of the same indisputable experience, that there is no other protection by which the institution can be maintained thus holy and entire, but by its alliance with the sanctions of religion.

Human law alone is insufficient to esta-

* HUME'S *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce*.

blish and to sustain the purity and the durability of marriage. The weakness of all that mere legal ordinances could effect has already been demonstrated by the ignominy of a defeat. That constancy and integrity of wedded love, which is consecrated by the injunctions of the Gospel, was also meditated by the wise severity of the ancient laws of Rome. The wonderful harmony which this inseparable union of interests produced between married persons, “ while each of them considered the inevitable necessity by which they were linked together, and abandoned all prospect of any other choice or establishment,” is recorded by the eulogies of Dionysius the historian* ; and, for the first five hundred years of the Republic, while the cove-

* Lib. ii., quoted by Hume in the *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce*.

nant was hallowed to the consciences of either party by their faith in the existence of the deities, who were invoked to ratify the engagement, the institution was maintained without injury or reproach. But the rite no sooner was deprived of its religious confirmation, by the failure of so salutary a superstition, than the arm of legislation became affected with a sympathetic debility. Its nerves appeared shrunk and withered, and its forces paralyzed. The feeble instrument, supported as it was by the recollections of past benefits, was unable to contend against the impetuous desires of the heart. Every barrier it interposed was insidiously undermined, or violently overthrown. The potency of its ordinances became invalidated by the corruption of the manners of the people; and all its faint and dying efforts to render itself heard were

drowned amid the clamour of their passions.

The same enemies, which in ancient Rome were so unhappily, but so successfully, exerted to procure the revocation of those valuable ordinances that give birth to the tranquillity and the happiness of families, are constantly operating among ourselves. They still retain all the vigour and the intemperance of youth, and have acquired nothing in the lapse of ages but inveterate pertinacity of error. Experience of evil or of good is equally addressed to them in vain. They are limited in their scope of vision, and are conscious of no objects that lie beyond the narrow range of their circumspection. —The passions, without any recollection of the past, or providence for the future, still persevere in their unremitting enmity against the sacred rigour of the marriage-

tie; they are continually endeavouring to desecrate its vows, to extenuate its respect, and to defeat its influence. The validity and force of that holy institution, in which the existence of all our domestic happiness is involved, is wholly dependant on the Gospel. It will prevail or fall with the ascendancy or the depression of the faith. It has no stability independent of its religious associations; and the sentiments, the opinions, and the reasonings, of mankind have never interfered with the divine appointment, but with an intent of mitigating the strictness of its conditions, and of opening a breach for the admission of licentiousness.

The arguments of the world, in this respect, have been so powerfully supported by the silent eloquence of our corruption, that even the professed disciples of the Saviour have begun to doubt the letter,

and to trifle with the sanctity, of the Gospel institution.—The Almighty, studious of the welfare of his creatures, has designed, that a powerful, but not an irresistible, solicitation of nature should urge every individual to the formation of those sacred ties, which, by connecting us with objects of tender and increasing interest, and placing us in the centre of undoubting and confident affections, seem to promise to us the brightest prospects of happiness on earth. The desires, reformed and regulated by the sense of religious duty, were designed to operate on the enthusiasm of youth as the springs of enterprise and the motives to honourable perseverance. Love, looking to marriage as its end, was intended to concentrate the ardours, and give direction to the energies, of the young; and—while it refined the soul by the exercise of self-

denial and of constancy—to stimulate the faculties to continued and diligent occupation. The hope of securing that certain place and independence in society, which might allow the engagements of affection to be ratified, was calculated to counteract the thoughtless prodigality of vice, and engender prudence in the heart, which was already consecrated to the generous virtues by the very nature of its motives and attachments. To a people rigorously and conscientiously existing according to the purity of the Gospel, those tendencies which now conduce, in the most important period of human life, to the waste and ruin of the health, the faculties, the sentiments and the affections, would constitute the most effectual instruments in inducing an early and virtuous stability of character.—Marriage would be the impulse

of exertion to their youth—the happiness of their manhood—the safety and consolation of their decline. These purposes we have attempted to reverse by the immunities which are permitted to the dawning passions, and by the seductions which are suffered to address them. In the stronger sex chastity has been denounced as an antiquated and exploded virtue. The very children of our public schools would conceal their purity as a crime, and blush at the affectionate praise which named it among their meritorious qualities, as at some egregious and scandalous imputation. The desires are forced into a precose maturity by licentious books and conversations, by bad precedents and the contagious vicinity of guilt; they are turned from their good and legitimate purposes by the facilities afforded to their forbidden gratification;

they are palliated by high examples and authorities ; and they are extenuated and recommended by the maxims of those who represent the licentious vices as necessities of nature, and the consequences of an inherent passion which is too imperious to be controlled by the visionary restraints of morals. Under the influence of such principles the young are withdrawn from the solid happiness of life. They are seduced from their permanent good by the very counsellors who appear most solicitous of their ease. No enduring attachments are formed. The heart dissipates in rapid and illimitable change. The purposes of Providence are thwarted. While loose and unhallowed habits are acquired by the eye and the imagination, which, when some arguments of a selfish and ignominious expediency shall, at length, persuade the voluptuary

to connect himself in more permanent engagements, render him incapable of performing the obligations he has assumed, and with which he has invoked his God to witness his compliance.

Having thus listened to the seductions of passion in their early years, and allowed, in opposition to the word of the Almighty, a license of inclination which it is afterwards found difficult to abridge, mankind have had recourse to another attempt to prevaricate with the restraints of the Gospel, and have imagined a world of sophistry to defeat the benevolent purposes of the Redeemer. They would render the covenant unjust by imposing on the weaker party all the strictness of the ordinance, and permitting an unlimited impunity to the will and the transgressions of the stronger. According to the prevalent opinions of the world, a

kind of unchristian dispensation has been granted to the offences of the male adulterer. It has been devised,—according to some system of comparative iniquity, in meditating on which the heart is presented with the gentlest declivity to sin, and the most flattering unction to allay the painful sensibility of the conscience,—that conjugal infidelity is less criminal in man than woman: and the privileged and licensed party has allowed himself to dwell on this supposed inferiority, till the sin has at length appeared to be deprived of its enormity, and to shew itself as insignificant and venial, and rather as a manly grace than as a moral deformity.

To this error Johnson has unintentionally afforded the sanction of his venerable name. Speaking of the heinousness of adultery, he affirms, that “as confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the

crime, a woman who breaks the marriage-vow is much more criminal than a man who does it*.”—This sentence of our great moralist is very frequently alluded to, in a manner which he never could have anticipated. It seems to be imagined that he designed to extenuate the offence. But this is a gross misapprehension. The observation of the author of the *Rambler* implies no more than that the vice, which is so deadly in the man, acquires a deeper taint in the transgressions of the female.—But even of this opinion let us “sift the verity.” Is the proposition true, which the corruption of the heart has shewn itself as anxious to substantiate on the authority of its passions, as if the inferiority of the guilt was an apology for the commission of the offence?—In the first place, as Christians,

* BOSWELL'S *Life*.

all disputes on the proportionate degrees and the comparative magnitude of crimes to us are irrelevant and vain. Our duty lies in the narrow compass of obedience to the laws of the Almighty; and, beyond the knowledge of his will, we can have no interest to induce inquiry. Now, if we derive our sense of virtue and of vice from the uncorrupted letter of revelation, we are informed, that with God there is no such distinction of persons.—If we look to “the essence of the crime,” we shall not find that it consists in “confusion of progeny,” but in the breach of conjugal confidence, which, if once impaired, can never be restored to its original integrity; in the wrong committed against the tenderest and most susceptible affections; in the infliction of a wound, which bleeds inwardly, and murders sleep and peace, and in comparison

to which death itself were a mercy and a deliverance ;—and more than all, “ the essence of the crime ” consists in the severing of a holy contract, which was made at the altar of the Deity, which was solemnly witnessed in his presence, and of which the violation will indiscriminately stamp either of the offenders with the guilt of perjury*.—Again, if we look to

* Payley says, in his *Moral Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 304, that the vow by which married persons mutually engage their fidelity *approaches* the nature of an oath.—An oath “ is a promise corroborated by the attestation of the Divine Being.” And if the marriage-vow fall not under this definition, I do not understand what does. The terms of the vow are “ witnessed before God and the congregation.”—The Almighty is therefore as much invoked as the invisible and guardian witness to the bond of mutual constancy, in a religious sense, as any of the visible witnesses are in an earthly sense. That nothing may be wanting to give solemnity to the contract, it is finally pronounced as covenanted between the parties “ in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”—Do not these things constitute “ a promise corroborated by the attestation of the Divine Being?”—As to “ approaching the nature of an oath,” it is impossible for such a half-consecration to exist. The Deity either is not, or is, called upon

the consequences of the sin, in what respect is the crime of the male culprit really less pernicious than that of the female?—I will not dwell upon the coldness, the silence, the abstraction, which mark the adulterer in the bosom of his family ; his eagerness to quit, his tardiness in returning to them ; his severe reproofs and constrained approval ; his fretful rejection of those gentle offices of duty and attention, by which his wife and children endeavour to conciliate his unkindness, and reconcile the stranger to his home ; his indifference to their amusements, their occupations, their studies

to attest the promise.—There can be no medium.—If he is not, the promise is a simple promise ; its conditions binding to the conscience, its violation obnoxious to the guilt of falsehood and deceit.—If the Deity is called upon to attest the promise, it then acquires the more sacred character of an oath, and idly to engage in it is blasphemous profanation, and its violation is perjury—which is the guilt of every offence against the marriage covenant.

and their improvement, which betrays the characters of a mind dissatisfied with itself, and agonizes the hearts of those who are dependant on his affections, by the afflicting consciousness that his soul is continually intent on some dearer and clandestine interests, and that they are irrelevant to his happiness.—“ Chastity in wedlock,” says Bishop Taylor, “ is the security of love, and preserves all the mysteriousness like the secrets of a temple. Under this lock is deposited the security of families, the union of affections, the repairer of accidental breaches. That contract, that is intended to be for ever, is yet dissolved and broken by the violation of this ; nothing but death can do so much evil to the holy rites of marriage as unchastity and breach of faith can*.”—But, without referring to the

* Sermon on the Marriage Ring.

wretchedness that the adulterer inflicts on those of his own house for the proof of the enormity of his offence, it must be remembered, that if the institution is worthy of being preserved at all, it must be preserved entire.—Domestic happiness does not depend on the virtue of one, but on the virtue of both the parents ;—and the extension of the evil principle, which is, at the present day, so unblushingly acknowledged, ultimately tends to the dissolution of the rite itself. Unless the female sex be again degraded to that subordinate condition, from which they have happily been raised by the operation of the Gospel, they will never consent to become the parties in so unequal and disproportionate a contract. They will not believe that a transgression which is venial in the husband, can be deeply guilty in the wife. They will be

seduced by example more than they will be restrained by the faint persuasions of a duty, which they perceive on one side to be violated without reproach.—It will be in vain to dwell upon the inferiority of the husband's crime.—A crime it is; and the virtuous will either separate themselves from all communion with the sinful, or will eventually become depraved by the association.—The heart, agitated by conflicting passions, stung by the wrongs of its affection, hardened by the bitter consciousness of desertion, and insulted by the preference of another, will not pause to investigate the nice degrees, and calculate the minute distinctions of offences that are apparently the same.—And this pretended inferiority of guilt, in what does it consist?—Why is the transgression of the adulterer to be considered as a light transgression?—With respect

to the confusion of progeny, on which such an important stress is laid by every unchristian moralist, it is one of those lesser accidents which hardly deserves consideration from any man who contemplates the offence in its severer characters ; who does not prize the temporalities of the earth before the blessings of eternity ; or estimate the misappropriation of an inheritance before loyalty in love, and chastity of mind, and purity of heart, and the reverence of a solemn oath, and the favour of Almighty God.—But, in this venial and light transgression of the adulterer, it must not be forgotten, that if the associate of his sin be wedded, his crime is also followed by the confusion of progeny ;—if otherwise,—is fornication, with all its attendant consequences of attainture to the heart and the imagination ; with the evil precedent that it af-

fords to the younger and less responsible members of society ; with the few years of wicked and luxurious indolence, succeeded by an age of disease and poverty and shame, which it entails upon its victims, to be ranked upon the catalogue of light transgressions?—Fornication may be aggravated by the darker iniquity of seduction. And is seduction a light transgression? Is it a light transgression to corrupt innocence to guilt, and modesty to shame—to blast a life and destroy an immortality? Is it a light transgression to become the father of a child, who, if he be not abandoned by his unnatural parent to track the deteriorating progress of his mother's wretchedness, and derive subsistence from the wages of her guilt, must, under the most prosperous circumstances, be born to infamy, and live the subject of reproach, and be destined

to experience all those torturing ills of bastardy, which will never be estimated among the inferior calamities by those who remember the pathetic and the eloquent lamentations of Savage.—In opposition to these malignant consequences, it were difficult to discover any arguments that might substantiate the adulterer's pretensions to impunity.—Man may challenge to himself an exclusive privilege of guilt, while he endeavours to enclose the female within the severest confines of virtue. It is natural that these immunities should be claimed; that the strong should be impatient of a compact, which places him on an equality with the weak; that he should avail himself of every opportunity of establishing the tyrannous ascendancy of FORCE; that in the plenitude of superior power, he should exclaim, as Judah did, when he received

intelligence of the incontinency of Tamar: “Bring her forth, and let her be burnt* ;” and behold!—he is himself the occasion and the partner of her iniquity. —But, in fact, if any extenuation could be admitted for the perpetration of a crime, which strikes so deeply at the foundation of our social and domestic happiness, that lenity, as in every other instance, is to be conceded to the sex of those whom the laws of God and nature have addressed to our tenderness, and submitted to our protection†. “In the

* Genesis, ch. xxxviii. ver. 24.

† Dans ce siècle même, au nombre des forfaits
 Je compte d'un époux la volage inconstance.
 Pour les femmes enfin j'aurais plus d'indulgence.
 Par le sentiment seul leurs jours sont agités ;
 Consacrant à lui seul toutes leurs facultés,
 L'histoire de leur cœur est celle de leur vie.
 Mais les hommes, voués à servir leur patrie,
 De mille soins divers s'occupant tour-à-tour,
 Peuvent plus aisément s'arracher à l'amour.

MADAME DE STAEL, *Sophie*.

grace of chastity, it is fit that the wisdom and severity of man should hold forth a pure taper, that his wife may, by seeing the beauties and transparencies of that crystal, dress her mind and her body by the light of so pure reflections ; it is certain he will expect it from the modesty and retirement, from the passive nature and colder temper, from the humility and fear, from the honour and love of his wife, that she be pure as the eye of heaven : and, therefore, it is but reason that the wisdom and nobleness, the love and confidence, the strength and severity, of the man should be as holy and certain in this grace, as he is a severe exactor of it at her hands, who can more easily be tempted by another, and less by herself*.”

The indulgence, which is now challenged for the nuptial infidelities of man,

* BISHOP TAYLOR's *Marriage Ring*.

even by many of the nominal disciples of the Saviour, is unwarranted both by reason and revelation; and if the passions, in opposition to revelation and to reason, have instructed the Christian in an indulgent sophistry which would dissipate the very spirit and efficacy of the Messiah's institution, we cannot be surprised that its severity should appear peculiarly obnoxious to the champions of infidelity. They have directed their most vigorous efforts to destroy this great palladium of our happiness. This is in the natural course of human action.—When men have renounced their hopes of immortality, sensuality becomes their sovereign good, and they are impatient of every restraint that limits their indulgence.—Hume has illustrated the advantages which result from a strict exclusion of all polygamy and divorce in an essay,

which is a perfect eulogy on the Christian ordinance ; but he has only dwelt upon it that he might manifest himself the advocate of human passion in opposition to the convictions of his reason. He has first proved the need of inviolable constancy in marriage, and then deserted his conclusions to countenance the dissemination of principles which would annihilate all the sacredness—all the dignity—all the confidence of wedlock ; which would destroy all the reality, and leave no residue but the empty semblance of the institution. He would instruct us to believe, that “ adultery is but a slight offence when known, and no offence at all when secret ; that it must be practised if man would obtain all the advantages of life ; that if generally practised it would in time cease to be scandalous ; and that, if practised secretly and frequently, it

would, by degrees, come to be thought no crime at all*.”—The spirit of unbelief, since the days of Hume, has acquired an audacity in the avowal of its sentiments. It no longer prevaricates with the virtues of the Gospel, or feels it necessary to continue its equivocating tone of insinuated censure and doubtful approbation. A younger and more intrepid adventurer in the fields of ethical speculation, has advanced yet farther the standard of demoralizing principle, and stigmatizing the sacredness of marriage as the origin of depravity†, would annul

* BISHOP HORNE's *Letter to Adam Smith*, p. 33.

† As a specimen of the ravings of infidelity take the following extract from the Notes to *Queen Mab*.—"Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than intellectual sensuality : it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law."—It is said that the notes of this volume were not written by the author of the poem. They have been attributed to a younger and less experienced hand, whose

all the reciprocal obligations of husband and of wife; all that confidence which naturally subsists between those whose interests are inseparably united; all security of permanent protection and support for children; all the peace and holiness and serenity of home, and erase the vices of seduction and adultery from the moral code, to merge the gratefulness of virgin purity, and the matron dignity of wife and mother in the polluted mass of general prostitution.

Not content with these attacks on one of

name I will not blast with so disgraceful an accusation on so vague an authority as that of popular report. It is indeed melancholy to reflect, that two persons of such talents, as these authors manifest, should be so blind to every prospect of their eternal happiness or misery. But it is not wholly uninteresting to ourselves, to survey how widely from the course of right even the most gifted intellects may wander on the wide sea of speculation, when they have once been tempted to cast aside that helm and compass of the mind, which the Almighty has so mercifully conceded to us in the lessons of revelation.

the most benevolent of the Almighty's ordinances, infidelity has meditated another infringement upon the sanctity of our domestic morals, and the happiness by which they are accompanied.—In our homes, at least, Christianity had prepared for us an asylum where the storms of life were silenced ; where we were surrounded by sanctified affections ; where the names of father and of mother were hallowed to our souls as the appellatives of sacred ministers, by whose means the providence of God had distributed to our childhood the blessings of love, of instruction, and of support ; where the names of brother and of sister were answered in the heart by affections purified of all the solitudes of rivalry, and all the agitations of passion ; where, flowing in their lawful course, and within the bounds prescribed by the Almighty, the quick emotions of our nature

adorned and fertilized the hours which, in other scenes and among less holy associations, they have been allowed to contaminate and to disturb.—Ungodliness would invade these precincts ; it has grown envious of the religious serenity of our homes ; it cannot bear that there should be any intercourse on earth independent of the thralldom, and undisturbed by the turmoil, of the passions ; and it has begun to level its attacks against those sacred principles of domestic purity, which religion has inspired, and which, inculcated with the opening of our reason, appear to us as the involuntary instincts and the original impressions of our nature.—The new school of unbelief has endeavoured, by palliating the enormity of incestuous guilt, to deprive mankind of every pure affection, and lay open the liberal intercourse of families to the suspicions of the

credulous, and the insinuations of the base.—Here guilt was warded off, and our happiness, which ever must be dependant on our virtue, was secured by a defence far firmer than any of mere mortal temperament could possibly afford.—Too secure against every open hostility, the enemies have attempted to insinuate the vice by stratagem into the sanctuary. They have not directed their attacks in the shape of argument, which might look repulsive to the many, but have cast about the bad instruction the attractive witcheries of song, that it might obtain a more universal access and a less discriminating reception. It was deemed, perhaps, that the barriers of our domestic virtue might fall before the hymnings of the host of Satan, as the walls of the unrighteous city fell before the trumpet-blasts of the army of the Lord.—There

is a story of Italian guilt, over which Dante has cast the deepest shadows of his genius. It was a tale of horror, and the Christian poet clothed it in all its appropriate circumstances of darkness and of gloom. An infidel author of our days has addressed himself to the same argument*. It appeared susceptible of being

* Mr. LEIGH HUNT. The allusion here is to the story of Rimini. In the Preface to another volume of poems, this author informs us of the object which he had in view in undertaking his longer poem.—In the 17th page of *Foliage* he says, “My creed, I confess, is not only hopeful but cheerful, and I would pick the best parts out of other creeds too, sure that I was right in what I believed or chose to fancy, in proportion as I did honour to the beauty of nature, and spread cheerfulness and a sense of justice among my fellow-creatures. It was in this spirit, though with a more serious aspect, that I wrote the story of Rimini—the moral of which is not as some would wish it to be—unjust, bigoted, and unhappy, sacrificing virtue under pretence of supporting it; but tolerant and reconciling, recommending men’s minds to the consideration of *first* causes in misfortune, and to see the danger of confounding forms with justice, of setting authorized selfishness above the most natural impulses, and making guilt by mistaking innocence.”

made the vehicle of moral corruption. He has decked it in light words, and arrayed the sin in roses, and demanded our sympathy for the transgressors.—He has publicly avowed that the latent object of his work was to extenuate an incestuous adultery with a brother's wife.—Our modern infidel literature has exhibited another and a more daring innovator in the schools of ethical impurity*.

* MR. BYSHE SHELLEY.—“ In the personal conduct of my hero and heroine, there is one circumstance, which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions, on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices that there are so few real virtues.”—Preface to *Laon and Cynthia*, p. 21.—The new virtue which this discoverer in the regions of moral philosophy is desirous of promulgating is the incestuous union of a brother and sister. The author adds, in a note upon this passage, “ The sentiments connected with, and characteristic of, this circumstance, have no personal reference to

There is one who, inspired with the terrible ambition of philosophizing away all the healthy virtues of existence, has begun to send abroad his visions of what he would persuade us to regard the moral regeneration of the world; and, as the first and paramount discovery of his ungodly speculations, he would annihilate those mysterious sentiments of kindred blood, which unite and sever the children of one family. He would inculcate among the institutes of antichrist an emancipation on which it were terrible to dwell, and which, among its lighter evils, would leave the female without a single unsuspecting protector of the stronger sex, and make a brother's house no longer an ho-

the writer."—It is rather extraordinary to find the inventor of a new system of ethics, thus apprehensive of sharing the imputation of a conduct which he would recommend to the practice of his countrymen.

nourable asylum for an orphan sister*.— In the heathen world the highest honours ever were attributed to those who had prescribed a limit to the savage liberty of nature, and confined its impetuositities within the bounds of legal institution. The disciples of unbelief appear to have abandoned this sentiment of admiration, and to imagine that the praise and reverence of mankind shall be conciliated by tearing down every salutary barrier, and re-delivering the earth to the exterminating subjection of the passions.— Their research only seems to be directed to the invention of new methods of debasement ; and, in the lowest deep, they appear to exercise themselves in no other occupation than the search after some

* Are some passages in Lord BYRON's *Cain* designed to support the incestuous theory of his friend Mr. Shelley?— Or, if they have not that purpose, what is it that they do imply?

lower deep, which they may reveal to our shuddering inspection.

It used to be objected to the enemies of religion, that “while every one was acquainted with what they wished to overthrow, no man could tell what they desired to establish as its substitute*.”—They have most egregiously vindicated themselves from this reproach. We have received a communication of their purposes. Having outraged our religious reverence by their impious doubts of the truth of the Redeemer :—having accustomed our most sacred feelings to tolerate the defamation of their best dependencies, they have possibly conceived, that, after this gradual and cautious preparation, we might at length endure to meditate the precepts by which they would supersede

* *Deism Revealed*, vol. i. p. 41.

the Decalogue, and reverse the purity of the Sermon on the Mount.

Lucretius, in the bitter spirit of his material philosophy, made it a reproach to the idolatrous superstition of his country, that it had instigated one dark act in the immolation of a daughter by a father's hand.

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum *.

This was evil:—but religion in its errors:—most appalling as may be the horrible exactions of blood and terror which they demand; most mournful as may be the blight with which they chill and wither the better impulses of the soul:—yet religion, in all the wildness of belief, with which the imagination has corrupted the principles of eternal truth, and depraved the conception of the Deity, has never claimed so inordinate a sacrifice, as that which has been premedi-

* *De Rerum Naturâ*, Book I. l. 81—102.

tated for itself by the genius of atheism. Superstition may have bound the living wife to the husband's funeral pile—it may have bade the parent offer up his child to appease the anger of an offended Deity, and “give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul.”—But if these things were presented to the remorseless idol, it was because these things were dearest. Atheism has contemplated a more egregious sacrifice.—It refuses the solitary victim, and lays its claim upon the fond affections by which the victim appeared hallowed for the altar. It does not crave the object of our love, but would exhaust the sources of all love. It requires as its appropriate offering the severing of every sacred tie, by which man is more closely knit with the inmates of his dwelling, that each individual may exist a forlorn, a friendless and an isolated being, and

feel himself alone amid the peopled solitudes of creation, a thing irrelevant to the providence of God, and abandoned by the benevolence of his kind.

That such is the miserable state to which mankind would be reduced by the entire predominance of infidel opinions, is not a subject of mere visionary speculation.—The Deity has imposed upon us the salutary restrictions of his laws ; but the moment we cease to reverence those restrictions as divine, they will be overborne by the impetuosity of the passions ; and the apostles of unbelief will furnish the deceitful arguments to palliate their violation.—France at this very hour presents to us the page in which we may contemplate the demonstration of these truths.—The names of God and the Redeemer are yet heard within her churches. The morals of the Gospel are still fami-

liar as a topic of discussion. From the influence of early prepossession they involuntarily have a certain action upon popular conduct. "The form of Godliness" is still retained in the national worship, and "the power" is yet resident with a few. These things cannot exist without conferring something of their purity to the apostate nation that contains them. While the temple still remains there will be found a kind of safety in its precincts. But to the many Christianity is indifferent, neglected, or despised.— "It intervenes in the occurrences of the world merely as an additional form in the more important transactions of social life: but it no longer bears to the unfortunate its consolations or its hopes. Its morality no longer directs the understanding through the straight and difficult passage of existence."—Such is the ac-

count which a modern French writer has presented to us of the spiritual corruption of his countrymen. He proceeds to detail the consequences.—“ A chilling egotism has dried up all the springs of sentiment. The domestic affections are extinct. There is no longer any respect, or love, or authority, or reciprocal dependance. Every man lives for himself, and for himself alone. No one any longer enters into those valuable and wise connexions by which the present generation is united to the generations which are to come*.”—To this dark por-

* La religion n'intervient que comme un usage dans les actes les plus solennels de la vie ; elle n'apporte plus ses consolations et l'espérance aux malheureux ; la morale religieuse ne guide plus la raison dans le sentier étroit et difficile de la vie : le froid égoïsme a desséché, toutes les sources du sentiment ; *il n'y a plus d'affections domestiques*, ni de respect, ni d'amour, ni d'autorité, ni de dépendances reciproques, chacun vit pour soi, personne ni forme de ces sages combinaisons, qui liaient à la génération future les générations présentes.—From Dr. ESQUIROL, quoted in the *Quarterly Review* for December, 1820.

traiture let the few, gloomy, and tremendous traits of national character delivered by Mennais be added, and we have the proof—as far as experience can be proof—of the inseparable connexion that subsists between the domestic charities and the reverence of Christianity. “Domestic crimes, poisonings, parricides, the murder of husbands by their wives, and wives by their husbands, are almost as common as larcenies were wont to be*.”

Such is the miserable destiny, by which the chaste and purified affections, that mingle to complete the tranquillity of our homes, would wither and decay before the depopulating breath of infidelity.—They avoid the presence of ungodliness, as

* Les crimes domestiques, les parricides, l'assassinat des femmes par leurs maris, des maris par leurs femmes, les empoisonnemens, le suicide, sont devenus presque aussi communs que le simple vol l'était autrefois.—MENNAIS *sur la Religion*, vol. ii. p. 20.

in the human heart the graces of the Holy Spirit are expelled by the invasion of the passions of the world. They are born with religion, and they perish with religion. They are indebted for their tenderness, their permanency, and their confidence, to those everlasting sanctions by which the marriage-covenant is purified, and consecrated and confirmed.—Their extinction has always been commensurate with the prevalence of unbelief:—and oh! my God,—if thy Scriptures be not the emanations of eternal truth, and if there be no bourn beyond the grave, let the morals of the ungodly be ascendant, and emancipate the will from those hallowed and venerable restrictions by which the happiness of the Christian is originated and secured. If it be, indeed, decreed that the soul shall perish with the body, and the affections cease with

the pulsations of the heart, there is a kind of barbarous and degrading wisdom in the vagrant sensuality of the godless. The abolition of all mutual obligations to constancy, and all tenderness of kindred blood, is for the repose of perishable man. —It is as an act of self-defence that the infidel rends asunder the ties of parental, of filial, and fraternal, love ; it is for the preservation of his tranquillity on earth, that he is solicitous to sever every alliance the instant it is formed ; it is to secure to himself a portion of mitigated pain, that he endeavours to seal up the avenues of his breast against every sentiment which may not be suddenly consumed in the fires of the passions, lest, by the familiarity of many years, by the companionship in pleasures that are past, by fond associations and by long remembrances, by the acquired similarity of taste

and feeling, by tenderness to pain and by watchfulness in sickness, by fidelity in sorrow and by sympathy with success, his soul should entertain too intimate and undivided an attachment ; and the object of his pure and his unalienable affection be regarded as the dearest benefit of an existence, which it ever more and more imbitters, by adding to the terrors of the grave the apprehensions of an eternal separation.

CHAPTER II.

Sect. I.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
HAPPINESS OF INDIVIDUALS FROM THE
TERMS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.

HOWEVER the destinies of mankind may externally be varied, the difference is more in appearance than reality. On a more close and minute consideration, the various conditions of society are not found to be so partially allotted as the mind might at first be tempted to conceive. As long as we are supplied with the decent necessities of life, it very little interests our personal enjoyment whether we are the inhabitants of the palace or the cottage. Those adorned and exag-

gerated descriptions of the old pastoral poetry, which pretend that innocence of mind and tranquillity of heart are inseparably connected with the unambitious occupations of the peasant, do not stray more widely from nature and from truth, than those invidious imaginations which imbitter so many moments of the poor man's life, by representing happiness as a necessary attendant on pre-eminence or wealth. Either fortune inherits its peculiar anxieties. The rich become satiated of their superfluities; the poor occasionally suffer from privations. The rich are weary of their indolence; the poor of their labours. The rich are agitated by the restlessness of energies unemployed; the poor are harassed by exertions that overcharge them. If the laborious languish for the repose and the banquet of the affluent; the affluent pine under the

want of that strenuous action which is necessary to render the banquet and the repose delightful :—but with respect to the great mass of their days, neither can with much confidence pretend to any peculiar exemptions from the calamities, or any exclusive admission to the felicities, of existence. There may be an outward distinction of the garments. The rich may cast an ermined robe about the sorrow which in the poor is open to every observation ; but this is, indeed, a valueless distinction.—The constant tide of human happiness or misery is ebbing or flowing at the heart. There it is that every individual, in his human nature, participates in a common property of hopes and fears, of desires and regrets, of affections and disappointments ; and there it is,—as far as we are dependant on our own resources,—that the unfailing

principle is resident which will assert for every man his legitimate equality of care. But, while all are thus impartially condemned, as fellow-sufferers under the torturing subjection of the passions, Christianity affectionately advances to claim an emancipation for its disciples, to reveal the nature of their connexion with the earth, to inform them of the real interests and the eternal import of their existence, and to confer upon them “the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”

Look down awhile upon that wide and beaten path-way of the world, on which such innumerable multitudes have arisen and contended, flourished and disappeared. From the myriads who are wandering there—in the valley of the Shadow of Death—direct your view towards the infidel and the Christian. Survey them as they are mutually liable to the general

dispensations of Providence ; as they are moving in the same scenes, and conversant with the same circumstances ; and observe with what a happy alchymy the votary of the Gospel can convert into accessions of joy and hope and consolation, those events which inspire the unbeliever with sentiments of despondency and sorrow.

To the infidel the very tenure by which life is held, affords a subject of continually increasing discontent. Every moment of more serious thought overcasts the spirit with the shadows of melancholy reflection. It is scarcely possible to conceive any state of torment more skilfully devised than that which this world must prove to those who are excluded from the prospects of immortality. If the most ingenious malevolence had presided at the creation of our race, and most curi-

ously contrived the gratification of its spleen, could it have invented any additional aggravations to the wretchedness of its victim? Could it have conceived any severer penalty than to provide him with the deep affections of the human heart, and multiply around him the objects that might attach them;—than to inspire him with the anxious forecast of the human mind, and bid him read upon the tombs of his companions, that a period is rapidly approaching, when all that is most exquisite and beloved shall become as superfluous to him as the trappings of his funeral, or the sun-beams that may repose upon his grave?

The woes of Tantalus are but as the fabled emblems of the real sufferings of the unbeliever.—In his childhood and his early youth he becomes enamoured of an existence which is to him as

cheerful as the song of morning birds, and careless as his heart, and various as his young imagination; but he has scarcely learnt to appreciate its benefits before he is awakened to the reflections that imbitter them. He is taught to love his being only that he may endure the miserable apprehensions of its decay. While the universe is beaming with delight, and every sensation is alive to pleasure; while every young attachment seems as imperishable as ardent; while, in the spring-time of his being, the earth seems prodigal of its flowers, and every flower is redolent of sweets, consideration—like an evil angel coming—suddenly envelopes the sunny scenes of nature in a noonday darkness, and casts a withering blight upon every blossom that is so luxuriantly springing up beneath his feet. The dreary prospect of his decline is

perpetually present to his imagination. Every symptom of decay, the blanching of a hair, the waning of the purple light of youth, the traces of the lines of time upon his brow, are intimations that are observed with sorrow, for they emphatically declare the transitory nature of those gifts in which, according to his limited estimation, all the advantages of life are centred. As his destiny is more favourably endowed, his apprehensions of its failure are increased. His path is beautifully adorned; but he knows no pleasurable emotion from the fair abundance of the present, for his heart is continually oppressed by the anticipation of the dreary desert to which it must inevitably tend. The shadows of approaching age are continually before him; and they lengthen and deepen as the sun declines; and they cast their darkness over

all the space that intervenes. He has recourse to the relief of dissipation; and the very banquet to which he flies for a refuge against himself; the intemperance by which he would overwhelm every importunate recollection of his end; the goblet, which he seeks to drown—the song, which he invokes to dissipate—the roses, which he would shower round him to banish from his mind the reflections on his decay, only operate as suggestions that insult, and as intimations that aggravate, his despondency. He cannot exclude the thought, that amid these things old age is insidiously advancing*.—He perceives in them the emblems of his perishable state; and, in the failing zest of pleasure, in the wasting goblet, in the

* Festinat enim decurrere velox

Flosculus angustæ, miseræque brevissima vitæ

Portio, dum bibimus, dum sarta, unguenta, puellas,

Poscimus, obrepit non intellecta senectus.—JUVENAL.

dying song, in the fading coronal, he looks with sadness on the images of his own deteriorating existence, and the memorials of his own mortality.

I am not guilty of any exaggeration in thus describing the spiritual wretchedness which ever clings to the mind of the unbeliever; which, by oppressing the imagination, urges him to expel the apprehensions of the future in the tumult of sensuality; and which still pursues him to the clamorous haunts of his debauchery with sentiments that alarm his riot. In every feature of the sketch I am warranted by the authority of the present and the past. Its truth is seen by the solicitude with which the idolizers of the world endeavour to conceal from others and themselves the natural encroachments of their years. It is heard in the tone of impatience and regret with which they

vent their sorrows over the departing endowments of their youth; and it is read, not only in the works of modern infidels, in the gloomy spirit of their poetry, and the sullen monotony of their discontented prose, but in the remains of a more venerable literature.

Whatever is transmitted to us of the familiar feelings of the ancient Greeks, may, perhaps, be most correctly found in those brief observations upon human life, which are handed down to us in their serious epigrams. That portion of the Anthology, which is of a graver character, lays bare to our observation the moral sense and the internal sentiments of enlightened and cultivated man, when he is uninformed of the eternal import of his being, and is aware of no other benefit in life than as it affords the means of sensual indulgence. These poems express

the passing emotions of his heart and the reflections of his solitary hours ; and they are indebted for all their beauty to their tone of evident truth and unexaggerated simplicity. They are of various kinds, and treat of various subjects. With maxims of philosophy, and pathetic lamentations over the brevity of youth and the insecurity of life, and epitaphs for the good, the beautiful and the renowned, we are addressed by exhortations to sensuality, that would gather its provocatives from the vicinity of the tomb, and from among the corruptions of the dead. But all those which are of a moral cast are stamp'd with the same melancholy impression. They are universally of a desponding character. The cause of this undeviating sadness, is eloquently given by an author who has made a selection of their fairest specimens, and transmitted them to our

language with a taste and harmony more than commonly in unison with the grace of the originals. — “ To those,” says Bland*, “ whose notions of a future state were perplexed, dark, and uncertain; whose belief in retribution was unsettled and wavering, and rather an object of speculation than a ground of hope or satisfaction, this present life must have appeared the boundary of all human hopes and fears: and the very uncertainty of its duration, and the dark and miserable gloom which involved every thing beyond it, will of itself account for the continual complaints of the sad lot of humanity to be found in the ancient poets. These ideas followed them in solitude, and crept in upon their banquets; and such are the remains of Mimnermus the poet of love and pleasure.”—

* *Translation of the Greek Anthology*—Preface, p. 7.

Now as we rise from the reviving wave,
 Braid we our locks, my Prodice, with flowers ;
 Drain we deep bowls of wine, and wisely save
 From slow-paced care youth's transitory hours ;
 For withering age upon our path attends,
 Joys drop by joys *;—

But if, in the absence of the hope of immortality, the earlier period of our residence on earth is saddened by the threatening aspect of the infirmities that accompany its conclusion, it must not therefore be supposed that the infidel, when that state of infelicity arrives, will find his affections weaned from life in proportion to the abstraction of its enjoyments. It is no uncommon error of the sensualist to conceive, that he should esteem it as a valuable privilege, after his faculties have become impaired and his favourite indulgencies less accessible, to be discharged of all that cheerless residue of privation and infirmity that

* *Greek Anthology*, p. 17. H.

must succeed. But, when such views are formed, the soul knows not how dearly it is attached to the mouldering tenement of clay that holds it. Life is loved, simply as life, long after all its perceptible advantages have perished. The term in which man would be willing to depart, like the horizon, ever flies before him. In the most complicated ills that “age, ache, penury, or imprisonment, can lay on nature,” the old still shew themselves unwilling to be deprived of that slow, weak and lingering remnant of existence, which in their youth they would have been so ready to resign. We know the saying which Seneca has reported of Mecænas*,—“that life was always sweet, and that he should still desire its continuance, though he had been broken upon

* SENECA, epist. 101.—*Debilem facito manu, debilem pede, &c.*

the wheel, and should be at last condemned to hang upon a gibbet.”—The same results follow the same principles, at Rome or in Paris, with the disciples of Epicurus or of Voltaire.—“Why is it,” exclaims Madame du Deffand, in her age, her blindness, and her hopeless unbelief, “why is it that I hate to live and yet fear to die*?”—As the years of the infidel increase he changes the nature of his apprehensions; but still there is an apprehension to agitate and oppress. It is no longer the morning of his being that meditates with pain on the encroaching obscurities of eve; it is the eve solicitously husbanding the last faint glim-

* Dites-moi pourquoi détestant la vie je redoute la mort; rien ne m'indique que tout ne finira pas avec moi; au contraire je m'aperçois du délabrement de mon esprit ainsi que celui de mon corps. Tout ce qu'on dit pour ou contre ne me fait nulle impression: Je n'écoute que moi, et je ne trouve que doute et qu'obscurité.—*Letter to H. Walpole*, vol. i. p. 312.

merings of day, and shuddering at the approaching horrors of the night. There is no longer a distinct and certain evil to be contemplated—an evil which the eye may scan and the intellect may measure ; but there is something of portentous, inscrutable and undefined, which—veiled in awe and mystery—is ever present to the mental vision of the unbeliever, and makes him cling with agony to life, rather than encounter the unintelligible fears, by which the inmost instincts of his nature are appalled, at the names of Death and of the Grave.—Though all the poetry of life is over—all its fascinations scattered—all its enchantments dissipated ; though he stands, as in a dreary solitude, with all his early associations severed, and every attachment of his youth buried in the tombs around him ; though all that is attractive upon earth has become irrele-

vant to him ; though disabused of every vision which his young imagination had conceived, and which hope had promised to achieve, still—with nothing for the mind and heart to rest upon but the cold realities of his loneliness and his decay—still he trembles at the prospect of his departure. His forlorn condition may be regarded as pitiable by others, but to him it still is precious ; for there is nothing else that interposes against the utter extinction of his being. Even pain itself is welcome, while it convinces him that he yet retains a habitation and a name among the things that are ;—

“ For who would lose,
 Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
 Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
 To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
 In the wide womb of uncreated night,
 Devoid of sense and motion * ? ”

Oh ! the soul does indeed shudder at

* *Paradise Lost*, book ii. l. 146.

destruction. — The whole human race, says Plutarch, *Παντες και Πασαι**, would rather undergo the punishment of hell itself, than be bereaved of their hopes of immortality. Nay:—it has been imagined, that to be deprived of consciousness—to become as they had never been is the punishment which the Almighty has reserved as the retribution to be heaped upon the heads of the most abandoned criminals†. The unbeliever suffers all the bitterness of this infliction. He has no delight in the present liberalities of his Creator; for to him, as to Atticus, the day and night are haunted by the images of death‡.—He pours on his own head

* Page 1104—Edit. RUALD.

† Some of the Jewish Doctors have so interpreted Tophet—Abaddon—the Vale of Slaughter, &c. &c.

‡ Quæ enim potest esse in vitâ jucunditas cum dies et noctes cogitandum sit jam, jamque esse moriendum.—CICERO, Tus. Dis. 1.

the vial of severest wrath ;—he voluntarily exhausts the vengeance of the Deity, and prevents the rigours of his justice.—Life may be misery, but then its end proposes nothing but despair ; for that end is annihilation :—and how terrible the dread of that annihilation is, we may learn from a multitude of witnesses ; from those who have turned apostate from the faith of their fathers ; from their lamentations over the want of a religious dependance* ; from the eagerness with which they fly in every hour of peril to seek a late protec-

* Mais de bonne foi, peut-on nier que la philosophie n'ait fait quelque tort à nos plaisirs et à notre bonheur, en affaiblissant le ressort de l'imagination, en refroidissant l'âme, en nous ôtant de douces illusions, et en nous forçant à secouer le joug de *plusieurs préjugés utiles à la multitude* ?—Se déchaîner contre le siècle parcequ'il est le siècle de la philosophie, c'est se déchaîner contre les arrêts de la nécessité, c'est se revolter contre la loi qui régla, de toute éternité, la marche et la conduite de l'esprit humain—tout cela ne nous persuade point encore que ce soit une chose si douce et si désirable que d'être d'un siècle philosophe. S'il est vrai

tion from the God they had blasphemed* ; from their hideous tenacity of life ; from the terrors of the death-bed of Voltaire ;

que le monde ne devient sage qu'en vieillissant, comment nous applaudir de notre profonde sagesse, sans regretter un peu les douces erreurs du bel âge, sans craindre sur-tout d'approcher bientôt du terme où l'on ne fait plus que rader?—*Correspondance littéraire, &c.*, de Baron GRIMM.

* Se voyant sur le lit d'infirmité, où l'irreligion ne leur est plus d'aucun usage, ils prennent le parti le plus sûr, celui qui promet une félicité éternelle, en cas qu'il soit vrai, et qui ne fait courrir aucun risque, en cas qu'il soit faux.—BAYLE, *Art. Bion. Dictionnaire Critique*.

S'ils sont assez fous, ils ne sont pas assez forts ; ils ne lairront pas de joindre leurs mains vers le ciel, si vous leur attachez un bon comp d'épée dans la poitrine ; et quand la maladie aura appésanti cette licenciense ferveur d'humeur volage, ils ne lairront pas de revenir et de se laisser manier tout discrètement aux créances et exemples publiques. Autre chose est un dogme sérieusement digéré, autre chose ces impressions superficielles lesquelles, nées de la débauche d'un esprit démanché, vont nageant témérairement et incertainement dans la fantaisie. Hommes bien misérables et écervelés, qui tachent d'être pires qu'ils ne peuvent.—MONTAIGNE.

The Abbé Mennais has given a list of those infidels of celebrity, who have on their death-bed endeavoured to alleviate the horrors of their departure, by seeking a reconciliation with their God through Christ. The passage is curious, and I transcribe it.—“Boulanger, Toussaint, Boulanvilliers,

from the faint, shrill earnestness of his dying cry—of that *faites-moi vivre*—which uttered through the stillness of his chamber so emphatic and intelligible a warning to the attendants of his parting moments.

While the constant ordinance of Almighty Providence, by which we are conducted from youth to age and from age to death, through a passage of graduating shade, till we arrive at the impenetrable darkness of the tomb, afflicts the unbeliever as the decree of an implacable and

Le Marquis d'Argens, Montesquieu, Maupertuis, Buffon, Dumarsais, Fontenelle, Damilaville, Thomas, Bouguer, de Langle, Tressan, Mercier, Palissot, Soulavie, Larcher.—Diderot voulait se confesser, on lui en ôta les moyens. *Sans moi*, disait Condorcet, parlant de d'Alembert, *sans moi il faisait le plongeon*. Il paraît qu'on se précautionna également contre la *faiblesse* de Voltaire, qui mourut, au rapport de Tronchin, dans les convulsions de la rage ; Jean Jacques, selon toutes les vraisemblances, termina lui-même sa vie. Il avait écrit en faveur du suicide, il avait écrit contre, et il finit par l'autoriser par son exemple."

rigid destiny ; to the Christian, on the contrary, this condition appears to be appointed by the counsels of an intelligence infinitely wise and infinitely benevolent. The Gospel interprets to him the symbolic language of creation, and discloses to him the purposes of its author. It instructs him, that this earth is but as a passing trial of his obedience. It reveals to him a higher state of being, to which the present is designed as a preparation ; and this important lesson reconciles every opposite testimony in the records of nature, and harmonizes every apparent dissonance in the Almighty's dispensations towards mankind. Through the merits of the Redeemer heaven is open as the recompense of his faith and virtue. This animating truth is perpetually before him. The dependence on his immortality is the restraining, the mode-

rating, the predominating principle of his affections. The natural consequence of this sublime persuasion is a holy disengagement from the world, and the pleasures and the vanities of the world. The steady light, which beams from beyond the grave, sheds its radiance over the long perspective of his existence, and consoles him for the gradual extinction of the bewildering meteors of the earth.—“He remembers his Creator in the days of his youth*.” He knows that the passions which tempt him from within, and the seductions that allure him from without, are the ministers and the instruments of his trial; and his heart is steeled against them, lest he fail in the terms of his covenant, and become enamoured of the things that may destroy. “He remembers his Creator in the days

* Ecclesiastes, ch. xii. v. 1.

of his youth:”—and, even in this life, he receives the recompense of his faith ; for to him “ the evil days do never come, the years never do draw nigh, in which he says he has no pleasure in them*.”—It is to the sensualist alone that the decay of the faculties of life are painful. The Christian can bear to part with the endowments of his corporeal nature ;—he can complacently remark the encroachments of his decline ; for his soul is instinct with immortality, and he can smile upon the ruin of those frailer properties, that lie wrecked, on either side, upon the banks and shoals of time. His gaze is fixed upon the upward soaring of the column of eternity ; and what are to him the things that crumble into dust about its base?—Age is to him a period rather of pleasing

* Ecclesiastes, ch. xii. v. 1.

expectation than of dread*.—He contemplates it as an easier state of his probation, when his temptations shall be diminished; when every rebellious emotion shall be less importunate; when the violence of passion shall be enfeebled; when the spirit shall be elevated by more affluent communications of charity and hope and faith; when duty shall be rendered more delightful by the relaxation of the holds of nature, by the increasing fervours of religious love, by the facility of habitual obedience, and by the increasing confidence of salvation. He

* Sir William Jones, that sincere and excellent Christian, in his *Bioscope*, considers, if I remember right, from sixty to seventy as the period of human happiness. Could Sir Thomas Barnard's book on the *Pleasures of Old Age*, have been written by any but a Christian? It must be remembered that the *De Senectute* was written on the supposition of the immortality of the soul—an opinion which Cicero adopted or renounced, as it suited the immediate purpose of his declamation.

looks without dismay upon his end ; for to him death has lost its sting, and the grave has been bereaved of victory. The Christ has gloriously triumphed for his deliverance. The tomb, to which he is advancing, presents to his contemplations no afflicting or intimidating prospect ; and he surveys the narrow mansion of the dead as the consummation of his hope, as the womb of his immortality, and as the passage to the land of promise.

To the disciple of the Messiah there is a source of joy and hope in every object, from which the infidel derives a pain and a solicitude.—In the close of autumn, and in the dawn of spring, all the appearances of external nature are so entirely similar, that the eye can trace no single circumstance of distinction. There are the same naked trees, the same moist

landscape, the same soft stillness in the air, the same gray unbroken canopy of clouds, the same pale and yellow glow on the horizon. There is no outward mark of variation ; yet with what opposite emotions does the heart interpret to the song of the ruddock, as, in either season, he carols lustily from among his leafless branches.—Even so it is with life to the perceptions of the disciple and the despiser of the Gospel.—The object is the same, yet how contrary are the sentiments which it awakens. The scenes that they inhabit, their human station, their personal endowments, are equally and impartially allotted. But these kindred circumstances do not inspire in their breasts a single kindred feeling. Each contemplates them as connected with different associations. Each surveys before him the same inevitable destiny in the

decrepitude of age, and in the cold obstructions of the tomb ; but each derives from them his train of appropriate and distinct reflection. To the unbeliever they are frowning signals of the decay :—to the Christian they are cheering harbingers of the revival of his being.

CHAPTER II.

Sect. II.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
RELIEF OF THE CALAMITIES OF LIFE.

WITHOUT the convictions of the Gospel life must be wretched from the very terms of its tenure. To the infidel, in possession of no certain hopes of immortality, his existence upon the earth is a state of graduating darkness: while to the believer it is a state of graduating light.

This advantage Christianity possesses over unbelief, even when the stream of life flows smoothest, and its current is disturbed by no gales of adversity or affliction. But it must be remembered that “man is born to sorrow as the

sparks fly upwards*.”—This important fact must surely be forgotten by those who meditate the abolition of our faith. It must surely be forgotten by them, that the being, whom they would thus wantonly bereave of every supernatural dependance and abandon to his own resources, is obnoxious to innumerable calamities, which no foresight can divine, no precaution obviate, no efforts of human wisdom can repair. It surely must be forgotten, by those who would deprive mankind of their religious confidence, that the earth does not always yield its increase to the labours of the industrious ; that the blossoms of the spring may fall before the lingering inclemencies of winter ; that the harvest may be scattered by the violence of autumnal tempests ; that the affluent may be suddenly deprest, and, rejected

* Job, ch. v. ver. 7.

by the troops of friends who courted his prosperity, may lament the privations of poverty as the least piercing and afflicting of his sorrows ; that while the young is moving upon the earth with the most assured security, in all the pride of beauty and of strength, a single breath of heaven may in a moment taint the springs of nature, and pour infection through the veins, and leave him, in useless and querulous imbecility, a burthen on the tenderness of his relatives, and a living admonition to the levity of his late associates. It surely is forgotten—by the apostles of infidelity, that the holiest and most devoted affections of this world may be violated or severed ; that confidence may be betrayed ; that the most fond attachments may be wronged by the ingratitude of their objects, or abandoned to pine and grieve under the perception of

their indifference ; that the course of nature is not always equal ; that the sapling may be suddenly cut off ere the trunk from which it sprung has withered ; that the trembling steps of the parent may follow in the slow procession of her child's funeral ; and that, where a sympathy of love and youth appeared to form another Paradise on earth, and to flatter hope with the promises of its continuance—even in that favoured home—one may in a moment perish, and leave no other companion to the widowed heart than the sense of loneliness and the tomb of the departed. Oh ! indeed, it must be the happy only, who could dare promulgate the merciless and the hopeless lessons of unbelief, and their spirits must have been nursed to pride by the too rare and constant prodigalities of fortune !—they must have closed their eyes

against the afflictions of their fellow-creatures, and hardened their hearts to pity ; they must have persuaded themselves into an obstinate delusion, that the chances of others are irrelevant to them ; and, like the wicked, “ boasted themselves in their heart’s desire, and said they should never be cast down* ;” or they would tremble, thus rashly to cut away the only anchor of their hope, while the ocean is lashing itself into wrath around them, and the storms are collecting over-head.

“ I shudder,” says Rousseau, in one of his letters to a disciple of Diderot, “ I shudder to witness your continual attempts against religion. Dear Deleyre, distrust your tendency to satire. Learn at all events to reverence religion ; humanity itself demands it. The great, the rich, the happy, would be delighted to hear

* Psalms, ch. x. ver. 3 and 6.

there was no God ; but the expectation of another life is in this the only consolation of the commonalty and the afflicted. —What cruelty to exclude them from that hope*!" Bewildered with sophistry, and darkened with prejudice and passion, as Rousseau's understanding was, it did not overlook the existence of those calamities by which we are so frequently reminded that this world is not intended as a state of enjoyment and of repose, but of purification and of trial ; and he was ready to confess, that a philosophy, which had been so long perplexed by unprofitable speculations on the origin of the evil, was

* “ Je tremble de vous voir contrister la religion dans vos écrits. Cher Deleyre, défiez-vous de votre esprit satirique. Surtout, apprenez à respecter la religion ; l'humanité seule exige ce respect. Les grands, les riches, les heureux du siècle, seraient charmés qu'il n'y eût point de Dieu ; mais l'attente d'une autre vie console de celle-ci le peuple et le misérable. Quelle cruauté de leur ôter encore cet espoir.—*Œuvres de ROUSSEAU*, édit. de Paris, 1788, tom. xxxi. p. 202.

not likely to exhibit any great proficiency in the means of its alleviation. He had measured the troubles of his breast with the consolations which might be afforded by the arguments of man, and he had witnessed their inability to aid. As he suffered, perhaps, the faint presentiment of the suicide*, to which their unmitigated irritation eventually impelled him, he endeavoured to interpose his arm against the more violent aggressor, and would have saved the temple, in which he did not yet despair of finding an ultimate asylum. While he acknowledged that Christianity was the only effectual means of consolation, like that highly-gifted and unhappy woman† whom his

* There is every reason to believe that Rousseau was the author of his own death.

† Madame du Deffand; in a letter to Voltaire she says,—
“ Si vous ôtez à ces sortes de gens leurs préjugés, que leur restera-t-il?—c’est leur ressource dans leur malheurs—et *c’est en quoi je voudrais leur ressembler.*” Again, to Horace Walpole.—“ Ma sante est médiocre mais je n’en désire pas

lessons had assisted to delude, he longed for the tranquillity of mind, which could only be communicated by religion, and which he envied as a protection against the afflictions of the world, while he despised it, in the pride of human intellect, as the effect of superstition and of ignorance.

We have already noticed several features of resemblance between the modern infidel, and the ancient heathen, philosophy. Each is also consistent with the other in considering despair as an essential attribute of sorrow ; “ professing themselves to be wise, they have equally become as fools*.” There is between them only one circumstance of distinction. The folly of the unbeliever has its origin in presumption and in crime ; the

une meilleure, je serais fâchée d'avoir plus de force et d'activité, mais ce que je voudrais, ce serait d'être devote, d'avoir de la foi.”

* Romans, ch. i. ver. 22.

folly of the heathen was the consequence of natural incapacity and error. The teachers of the new philosophy, by rejecting that religious superiority which has been mercifully conceded to them by the Messiah's revelation, have reduced themselves to the same miserable state of darkness, which the teachers of the old philosophy had in vain endeavoured to disperse by the insufficient light of the understanding. Refusing the alliance of the Gospel, after infinite toil of meditation, the modern infidel has discovered that man is born to sorrow, and that all his sorrows are irremediable. Before the day-spring from on high had shed its animating rays about the world, the most gigantic faculties of antiquity had, in the same manner, been employed in imagining a relief for our afflictions, and had arrived at the same desperate conclusions. Like the most skilled and sub-

tile of the modern teachers of ungodliness, the most endowed and erudite of the heathen world had acknowledged that there was no happiness attainable to man, independent of the possession of health, good fortune, honour, and riches. These things were esteemed as indispensable, and they could invent no consolations for the indigent. Every state of disease, abasement, or distress, was a misery that allowed of no alleviation; and in this solitary sentiment the grossness of Diogenes sympathized with the refinements of Plato, and the acuteness of Aristotle*.

* Solon lamenting the death of his son, one told him, "you lament in vain;"—"Therefore," said he, "I do lament, because it is in vain." This was a plain confession how imperfect all his philosophy was, and that something was still wanting. He owned that all his wisdom and morals were useless, and this upon one of the most frequent accidents of life. Plato himself, with all his refinement, placed happiness in wisdom, health, good-fortune, honour, and riches; and held, that they who enjoyed all these were perfectly happy; which opinion was, indeed, unworthy of its

—It afforded, indeed, a splendid theme of declamation to defend the omnipotence of virtue, to assert its superiority over the malice and the wrongs of fortune, to declare that in every condition of existence it was its own reward, and sufficient to its own enjoyment; but the fallacy of these pretensions was honestly and unequivocally confessed. It was granted by “the wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world,” that their virtue became unnerved and powerless in every severer grapple with affliction* ;

owner, leaving the wise and good man wholly at the mercy of uncertain chance, and to be miserable without resource. His scholar Aristotle fell more grossly into the same notion. —Nay, Diogenes, from whose pride and singularity one would have looked for other notions, delivered it as his opinion, that “a poor old man was the most miserable thing in life.”—SWIFT’S *Sermon on the Wisdom of this World*.

* Virtue alone does not constitute happiness. A man possessed of virtue may be asleep or inactive. He may never through life have an opportunity of exhibiting his good qualities—and, notwithstanding these qualities, he may fre-

and that the vulture would prey upon the heart, however the stoic might endeavour to conceal its lacerations by casting over them the ample garments of his pride.

In the hour of unalloyed felicity, the philosophers of the world may argue like the sage in *Rasselas*, and “ exhort their hearers to lay aside their prejudices, and to arm themselves against the shafts of malice and misfortune, by invulnerable patience ; they may pronounce that “ this state alone is happiness, and that this happiness is in every one’s power* ;”—but, when the moment of their sorrow comes, they will find, like him, “ that truth and reason can afford no comfort :” affliction will reveal to them “ the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy

quently be involved in the greatest disasters ; such a man was never, *except for argument’s sake*, pronounced happy.—ARISTOTLE, *Ethics*, book i. p. 246. Gedde’s Translation.

* *Rasselas*, ch. xviii.

of polished periods and studied sentences;”—it will instruct them not to look down upon the earth for succours that can only be derived from heaven, or solicit from the aids and arguments of man, those alleviating influences which proceed as emanations of divinity.

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity. If he be reduced in fortunes—why poverty is but a removal from the vanity and the temptations of the wealthy; it is a deliverance from many incumbrances and many dangers; it is to be clad in coarse habiliments*, “to feed on simple fare, to work and take some pains, to sit in a lower place, to have no heaps of cash or hoards of grain, to keep no retinue, to have few friends and not one flatterer. What,” demands Barrow, “what is the harm of

* BARROW’S Sermon on Contentment.

this !”—What indeed is the harm to him who confidently reposes on the superintending providence of the Almighty, and knows that the contingencies of fortune are, in his hands, the instruments of our spiritual instruction—“that he giveth and taketh away”—that he can restore as he has reduced, and that “all things work together for the good of those that love him*.”

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity.—In the languor of disease, in the severest paroxysms of pain, in the slow advances of a consuming and inevitable decay, he still possesses, in the promises of everlasting glory, a region whither the aspirations of his heart may wing their way and be at rest ; and he can still fortify his soul with patience by the contemplation of those bright ex-

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 28.

amples of suffering and enduring virtue, which of old were written for his instruction in the oracles of God*. In the constrained retirement of the sick bed he communes with his heart; and, as his conscience testifies of its lingering corruptions, he confesses the mercy and the justice of his chastisement. He holily avails himself of the religious uses of his adversity; it prospers his advancement towards perfection. His affections attach themselves to heaven, as they are removed from every possibility of indulgence upon earth; and the assurances of the faith are strengthened, as the faculties of life are wasted. “He is no longer in

* What human arguments could have supplied Collins with the support he derived from the use of the Bible, when, in the lucid intervals of insanity, his delicate and gentle mind—

“Sought on one book its troubled thoughts to rest,

“And wisely deemed the book of God the best?”—

COLLINS' *Epitaph*, by Hayley.

the flesh but in the spirit*.” “Let wild beasts tear him,” says Tertullian†, “let their feet trample on him, let the cross suspend him, a praying Christian can endure any thing while his hands are stretched towards his God.” Exalted by the fervours of his devotion, the disciple of the Saviour lies calmly upon the rack of his disease, and, like the blessed saints and martyrs, bears gently with every bodily oppression, conscious that these “light afflictions, which are but for a moment,” may work for him, as for St. Paul, “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory‡.”

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity. Are his attachments wronged? is his honest confidence betrayed? is his undoubting generosity

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 9.

† Quoted in MILNER'S *Church History*, vol. i. p. 284.—Octavo edition.

‡ 2 Corinthians, ch. iv. v. 17.

deceived?—Still he is not deserted. He can rely upon the love of his Creator and his Redeemer, who are ever affectionately near him, and who assure to him, in heavenly communion, an indemnity for every injury, and a bright atonement for every ingratitude of man. Does jealousy traduce his motives? do ignorance or malice misapprehend his purposes?—He can dispense with the approval of the world. His conduct is not exposed to its inspection. His actions are not dependant on its censure. His life is submitted only to the judgment of his conscience and his God; and, if these sacred and unerring arbiters acquit him, he is contented to await the dispersion of the clouds of calumny, till that portentous hour, when, with the revelation of the secrets of all hearts, his innocence shall for ever be declared before the judgment-seat of the glorified Redeemer.

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity.—If the breast of man be wrung with contrition for offences into which he was betrayed by the levity of youth or the violence of passion, by the seduction of evil counsels or the persuasion of unhappy associations, there is no other relief, that can possibly be imagined for the anguish of the repentant heart, than that which is mercifully afforded in the redemption of Jesus.—I am perfectly aware, that “never to reproach the crimes of others, or repent one’s own*,” has been delivered among the institutes of infidel philosophy by one of its most applauded teachers; but, however great its depravity may be, human nature is tempered by an instinctive benevolence; and there are few, who have been

* “Ne rien reprocher aux autres, ne se repentir de rien : voilà, les premiers pas vers la sagesse.”—DIDEROT *Lettre à M. L.*—GRIMM’s *Correspondance*, tom. ii. p. 62.

educated in the vicinity of Christian manners, and have lived within the influence of Christian principles, whose hearts are hard enough to receive this last and most enduring polish of ungodliness. Until Infidelity shall be ascendant; and society totally depraved by the consequent prevalence of lawless passions and iniquitous examples, there are not many who will be capable of attaining so scholar-like a proficiency in the groves and porticoes of atheism, as to maintain their bad tranquillity undisturbed, when brought to a conviction of their sin by some of its more impressive and awakening remonstrances.—It is true that the apprehension of punishment is the most rigorous avenger of iniquity; that the stings of conscience are but unproductive and transitory emotions, unless they are confirmed by the expectation of an eter-

nal retribution; that by the irreligious the apathy of reprobation is respected as the serenity of wisdom; but, till the sinner has attained that state, till his breast is hardened, beyond the obduracy of ordinary vice, by the total abandonment of the grace of God, it is impossible that his soul should not thrill with horror in situations, which bring the miserable consequences of his guilt distinctly and unequivocally to his view, by the presence of the ruin he has occasioned.—As long as the wicked is susceptible of compassion, he must also be susceptible of remorse; as long as he has a tear to shed for any sorrows but his own, his conscience will never fail reproaching him for the sorrows that he has himself inflicted upon others.—Could the sensualist, when he accidentally encountered the altered being whose beauty had instigated

his designs, whose affections he had coldly and deliberately won, whose innocence he had betrayed to crime, and whose crime he had abandoned to gravitate to lower and to lower depths of infamy and woe:—I would seek no other example among the infinite varieties of sin, and of misery the consequence of sin,—but could the sensualist, when his miserable and forsaken victim stood before him in all the squalidness of disease and poverty, and wasted by the premature decay of sorrow and of sin;—could the sensualist in such a moment suppress the rising emotions of contrition, and fortify his heart by the counsels of his selfishness, and sustain the constancy of vice by the inhuman maxims of his philosophy?—I am not one of those who support the modern heresy of opinion, and entertain any very favourable estimate

of the dignity and the excellence of humanity ; but I believe that such an admonition, presented unexpectedly to the sinner in the midst of his own careless and triumphant iniquity, would strike an arrow to the soul, which would adhere with a barbed point, and there rankle and mortify for ever.—His memory would become deeply and permanently impressed with an image which would rise before him in the vision of the night, and haunt the brightest scenes of dissipation, and recur as the inevitable pain to aggravate the dejection of every moment of lassitude or of disease. He would in vain endeavour, under the weight of this spiritual affliction, to discover some oblivious antidote that might restore the depression of vice to the hilarity of virtue. He would in vain repeat, that in his seduction he had only followed the direction of a passion which nature had made impetuous,

which his instructors had warranted by their precepts, and which mankind had authorized by their example ; that in his desertion he had only again obeyed the suggestions of his heart, and acted in correspondence with the dictates of the new philosophy, which disdained that the liberty of man should be constrained by any vows or obligations to constancy, after the caprice of his inclinations had annulled the covenant ; he would in vain exclaim, that the whole course and tenor of his conduct was defensible by much argument, and was supported by innumerable precedents, and had never suffered any condemnation, but from the commandments of God and the holiness of religion, from the prejudices of priests and the scruples of women, and from the sorrows and the disease and the desolation of its victims.—While a single spark of natural sympathy remained ; while any

sentiment of compassion still resisted the contagion of evil actions and of evil counsels, such an immediate perception of the wretchedness he had wrought would penetrate the soul of the guilty, and alarm his sense of justice, and instruct his understanding to deduce from the consciousness of sin the apprehensions of a judgment.—But be it so:—he is stricken with contrition;—his conscience is oppressed, and his heart agitated;—but his contrition is no more than an unprofitable sense of pain.—If in the touch of pity the last, faint, lingering illuminations of the Spirit still plead with him against his crimes, there is another monitor in his heart which tells him that atonement is impossible; that reform is only effective for the future; that no human exertions can make a reparation for the past; and that if sin has reduced him to repentance, despair should

urge him back again to sin.—This is the constant language of the transgressing heart, and it is universally supported by the counsels of his associates. For the despondency that follows upon crime they are ignorant of any other succour than the intoxication of debauchery and riot.—They have no remedy to propose for the remorse of conscience except the continuance of the sin that caused it. But are these the intimations of the Gospel?—Oh! no:—far otherwise. It declares that there is a peace for his despair, which is accessible by the oracles of his God;—that there is a refuge in the mount of crucifixion;—that there is a safety which emanates from the Cross.—Christianity calls upon the guilty for the tears of his repentance, and tells him that in these is hope;—it calls upon him for the reparation of his offences, and tells him that in

these is hope ;—it reveals to him the abundant fountain of all hope in the mysteries of revelation, in the mercy of the Creator, in the atonement of his Redeemer, and in the mediation of the glorified Messiah.

The Christian inherits a consolation for every calamity.—Unless we ourselves are summoned prematurely to the grave, it has been determined, by an irresistible decree of Providence, that we must witness the dissolution of many to whom we have been attached by the ties of kindred blood, by the similarity of tastes and sentiments, by the recollections of their virtues and their kindness, by the long and uninterrupted habits of familiarity, or by their companionship with our most favourite pleasures and most interesting pursuits.—There are who can endure these separations, who mingle no

gentler feelings of benevolence with the intercourse of their companions, who, secure behind the impenetrable protection of their selfishness, can calmly speculate on the opportunities which their deaths shall open to the purposes of their avarice or their ambition, and can see them swept into the grave with as philosophic an apathy as one might gaze upon the departure of the day, or mark the scattering of the leaves of autumn. When, therefore, in the death of friends, these pay the penalty which is universally demanded for the happiness which their society has afforded, there is no necessity of any religious arguments to administer to them a consolation.—There are others—and of such perhaps is the large majority of mankind—whose natural sensibilities are suppressed beneath the weight of various occupations, and are

only awakened to a transient consciousness of being in some moment of more violent or extraordinary excitement; and these, to-day, follow weeping behind the corse of the departed, and then look down into the grave, and then dash away the tear, and then every melancholy reflection on their loss is dissipated by the more urgent and immediate interests of the morrow:—and neither do these feel the necessity of any support from the suggestions of religion.—But there is yet another class, whose souls are more exquisitely wrought, and vibrate to the touch of sorrow with a thrill of longer and of deeper feeling. There are real mourners, who cannot thus readily eradicate the traces of affection, who cannot erect the monumental marble to spread abroad the memory of virtues, which they themselves have committed to oblivion.—

There are to whom all the treasures of existence, which can be squandered on them by the lavish hand of fortune, operate as painful accessories to affliction, when bereaved of the companionship of those they love. There are to whom the customary sables, which the world may bear about in mockery “to midnight dances and the public show,” do not darken with deceitful indications, but present the faint and inexpressive images of a sadness that casts its shadows upon the heart. And to these the shaft of death strikes doubly. It kills in its aim and its recoil. The wound by which one is slain rankles in the breast of another ; and wherever he may flee to dispel the sense of desolation, an icy hand conducts him ; he inhales every where the chilling vapours of the tomb ; the knowledge of his existence is reported to him by a

steady and even flow of sorrow; there seems no brightness in the sun, which to him burns and does not comfort; his food does not nourish, his sleep does not refresh him; his mind reflects its darkness upon every object that addresses him; and if, in the accidental intercourse of society, he is withdrawn a moment from the more distinct remembrance of his grief, a vague and uncertain feeling of depression, reproaches the involuntary smile, and re-awakens him to the assurance of his wretchedness and his desertion.—But, when the mind thus feeds upon the poison that threatens its destruction, and the broken heart thus loves to entertain its sorrow, as a companion dearer to it than any other thing which survives upon the earth, there is, indeed, a demand and a necessity for the consolations of the faith.—To what

other succour can the miserable address himself?—What alleviation can the light of reason offer?—Man has no counsels to propose to his affliction which do not shock the sacredness of his recollections, by requiring an oblivion of the past, or which are not impossible to the instinctive constancy of every holier and purer spirit, by demanding the adoption of new objects of attachment. But, while these things jar upon the ear of the afflicted, and sound repulsive to the tenderness of his sorrow, the Gospel affectionately pleads with him in a voice that thrills in unison with all his sad and cherished and prevalent emotions. Christianity has none of that hard and dreary stoicism which St. Paul denounced as the “want of natural affection*.” It touches gently on his sorrows; it speaks with compassion to the

* Romans, ch. i.

dejected, and looks down with reverence on his grief; it tells him, that he may retain the remembrance of his loss—that to cast it from the mind were to annul the merciful designs for which the Eternal had inflicted the calamity—that he may grieve, “but not as one without hope*.”—And, while the religion of the Saviour thus mildly and emphatically addresses him, it administers a glorious hope, which supplies the void and solitude of his heart, which confirms his spirit with the grace of patience, and which renders his affliction another motive to religious vigilance and exertion, by proposing in the re-union beyond the grave a more affecting stimulant to virtue, and a more immediate interest in contemplating the beatitude of the elect†.”

* 1 Corinthians, ch. xv.

† Perhaps the best illustration of the state of mind, which I have attempted to describe, is to be found in the example

But, while the Christian thus inherits, in the instructions of the Gospel, those motives to fortitude and resignation, which,

of Beattie.—The blow that leaves us desolate on earth may slowly destroy us, or, in minds that have perhaps an hereditary tendency to insanity, may put the diseased principle in action. These are infirmities of nature—which follow as necessarily as “the quivering of the flesh where the pincers tear.” But Christianity mitigates the agony, while the wound is working its immediate event. The following extracts from the letters of Beattie speak of themselves all that I would say.—His only surviving child had just breathed his last. He writes to Sir William Forbes, “our plans relating to Montague are all at an end, I am sorry to give you the pain of being informed, that he died this morning at five—” here follows an account of his pious dissolution. Beattie concludes—“I would have written to Mr. Arbuthnot, but have many things to mind, and but indifferent health. However, I heartily acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence which are all good and wise.”—In another letter he says,—“A deep gloom hangs upon me, and disables all my faculties; and thoughts so strange sometimes occur to me, as to make me ‘fear that I am not,’ as Lear says, ‘in my perfect mind.’—But, I thank God, I am entirely resigned to the divine will.”—Campbell has said, speaking of Lord Lyttleton’s *Monody*, “that devotion teaches a man not to be sorry.” This is an extraordinary assertion from one who has in another place so well expressed the spirit of Christian sorrow. Campbell’s poetry is, in this instance, more

under all the numerous accidents of his perilous condition, may moderate the pressure of calamity, and convert them into the means of holiness and improvement, and of that joy which springs from the perception of improvement, it must always be remembered that his strength is not alone attributable to the mere na-

truly Christian than his prose. "The spirit of the white man's heaven forbids not him to weep." The critic states that religion robs the monody of its beauty, "because nature, sorrow, and tenderness, are the true genius of such things."—Nature, sorrow, and tenderness, are also the genius of Christian affliction: neither can I conceive them to be rendered less worthy objects of poetic imitation, because the nature of the mourner has been refined by the lessons of revelation; and his distress is as a visitation from on high; and his tenderness is enhanced by religious cultivation. The hope of a future re-union after death would constrain the wildness and the distraction of his sorrow; but grief is never so affecting as when its vehement demonstrations are suppressed. We then know that the afflicted person apprehends the fulness of his distress. The calm allows an opportunity for sympathy. Clamorous grief is as delirium or insanity; and we are too much alarmed for the physical consequences of so violent a passion, to feel any interest in the calamity that occasioned it.

tural effects of consolation, which such elevated and inspiring arguments might produce ; but that there is accessible to him in the graces of the Holy Spirit of God the faculties of a super-human patience and the energies of a divine resistance.

When St. Paul speaks of man as being composed “ of body, soul, and spirit*”, he uses the language of Plato, of Zeno, and of Pythagoras. The threefold nature of our existence was probably delivered to the Gentiles with other scattered truths and lingering notices of traditionary revelation. But, thus separated and scattered, the fragments of eternal wisdom were valueless to the possessor. The knowledge, like music to the deaf, or the glow of morning to the blind, was excellent in itself, but void from the imper-

* Thessalonians, ch. v. ver. 1.—See Macknight’s note on the verse.

fection of the being to whom it was delivered.—The soul, which is the seat of his passions and his appetites ; the body, which is the abode and subject of the soul, may be considered as his human properties, and for those, by his human means, he has the ability of providing. But the spirit, which is to man his pre-eminence above the creatures, his principle of immortal life, his connecting link with the host of angels, is inaccessible to his reach, and impervious to his instruction. It is designed as the light, the vigour and the strength of his inferior qualities, but it is from above that its accessions of strength and of vigour and of light are to be received. Its ethereal essence is incapable of any alliance with those material creatures, with which we are conversant on earth. It is an inspiration from heaven, and by influences

from heaven only can it be visited or cherished. It is an impulse of divinity, and can entertain communion with no existences which are inferior to its God. As the human soul is blank without the aid of the senses to inform it, so is the immortal spirit without the assistance of revelation. As there are all the particles of light confined in the recesses of the darkest cavern, which without the action of the sun are destitute of all their efficacy and motion, so does the spirit lie inert and dull and faint in the absence of those invigorating principles of religious faith and hope, which the Gospel, and the Gospel only, can communicate. As long as the philosopher of this world was prosperous, this deficiency was little felt. Aristotle names piety among the attributes of good-fortune*.—Imagining that

* ΕΥΤΥΧΙΑ φιλοθεος.

the treasures of the earth were evidences of divine favour, the spirit of the heathen, in the hours of security or peace, might delight itself in sentiments of gratitude, and expatiate in its proper elements of devotion and of praise. But, in the visitations of affliction, when the body was stricken with disease, or the soul was wrung with anguish; when the voice of counsel was wasted on the deafening agony of pain, and only irritated the aching sensibilities of sorrow; when the holier and the purer portion of his nature should have asserted its pre-eminence, and, firm in its impassive divinity, have controlled the tributary sensations of the body and the inferior affections of the soul; when it should have commanded the resignation of the carnal man, by emphatic remonstrances and pathetic intimations from on high:—then, in the

hour of severer trial, he was left alone, defenceless and forlorn ; he was shorn of his strength ; the God within him was sleeping and could not be awakened ;—No :—say rather it was sunk into despair. Philosophy had informed it with no arguments.—Instead of aiding the properties of his human nature in the endurance of calamity, his spirit was itself bowed down by the oppression of their burthen. The interruption of its happiness was as the abandonment of its God, and uttering unnatural blasphemies against that heaven to which it was allied, it aggravated the sense of earthly sorrow by the bitterness of religious despondency*.—To this more

* “ Hippocrates said, that although *poor men used to murmur against God*, yet rich men would be offering sacrifices to the Deity, whose beneficiaries they are.”—BISHOP TAYLOR’s *Sermon on the Mercy of God’s Judgments*. “ I hate the very Gods, who have hitherto been so very profuse in their favours to me,” says Cicero, speaking of the death of his daughter in a letter to Atticus.

elevated endowment of our being Christianity appeals. It is by the spirit that all our eternal interests are apprehended and achieved—that we love the author of our being—that we “eschew evil and do good”—that we overmaster the seductions of the heart—that we avail ourselves of the privileges of our immortality. Christianity restores the spirit to its rank and efficacy, informs it with lofty and important instances, invigorates and renews and augments its energies, and re-establishes its legitimate dominion over the low and animal qualities of our nature. It is these alone that are penetrable by the disasters and the solitudes of this life; and strong in faith, and aided by the powers of the Gospel, the spirit can cry peace to their inferior agitations,—as Jesus did to the winds and to the sea,—and they are pacified, as the ele-

ments were calmed. Christ is the only succour of the wretched—he is equally a Saviour in heaven and on earth. His religion is peculiarly the religion of the miserable.—“Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest*.”—This is the promise of the Gospel, and never has it falsified its covenant. Its disciples, like St. Paul, may be “troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed†.” In every calamity they find a consolation and a support; for still the Spirit of Christ “beareth witness with their spirits that they are the children of God‡,” and subdues the throes of nature with communications of that heavenly “peace which passeth un-

* St. Matthew, ch. xi. v. 28.

† 2 Corinthians, ch. iv. ver. 8, 9.

‡ Romans, ch. viii. ver. 16.

derstanding*,” and which is alone derivative from Him “which is and which was and which is to come †.”

But I would again revert to the point from which we started. I would again recall the attention of the reader to that valuable admission of Rousseau, which declares, that “the expectation of another life constitutes in this the only consolation of the miserable.” To minister to grief on any other principle has always defeated the ingenuity and exceeded the capacity of man. Destroy the hopes and the promises of religion, and the minds of the wretched are abandoned to roam abroad over the measureless wastes of their despair; to weep like Solon over his child, and to weep in vain, and to weep the more, because it is in vain they weep.—Infidelity offers them, indeed, that

* Philippians, ch. iv. v. 7. † Revelations, ch. i. v. 4.

solitary resource which in the ancient world was vaunted as the last relief for every disquietude, whether of mind or heart, of poverty or of disgrace. Like wayward children they may refuse the benefits that remain to them, in petulant resentment of the benefit that they have lost. They still are masters of their existence, and by suicide they may at any moment dismiss themselves of their afflictions*.— This is the dreary port, in which the godless are taught to look for their repose, when the storms of life beat hardest. But it is a harbour which none but minds of the firmest temperament can make. Such men as Cato or as Brutus, with that blind and “savage jealousy of disgrace that somewhat savours nobly,” may, perhaps, inspire a Portia, by the examples of her

* Suicide is recommended by nearly all the modern infidel writers.

father and her husband, to attempt a violent deliverance from the accumulated calamities of life. But this guilty and miserable method of escape is superfluous to the many. It is repulsive to their instincts. The natural apprehensions of the heart withhold them from the refuge that is offered.—The poet* of atheism may mock their miseries, and insult them for enduring their misfortunes; and he may point out to them the graves that yawn for their reception; but they recoil with horror from the view, and, bowed down by the burthen of their sorrows, they will rather choose to toil beneath the unmitigated weight, than anticipate that tremendous annihilation which his philosophy proposes as their asylum.

* A violent death is the last refuge of the Epicureans as well as of the Stoics. “This,” says Lucretius, “is the distinguishing character of a genuine son of our sect, that he will not endure to live in exile, in want, and disgrace.”—BENTLEY’S *Confutation of Atheism*.

CHAPTER II.

Sect. III.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
ENJOYMENT OF WORLDLY PROSPERITY.

ALL the exertions of the unbeliever must necessarily be directed to the attainment of the treasures of the world. These are his only objects of interest, of affection, of pursuit. He has no motive to diligence but the desire of enriching himself with the rewards of pleasure or ambition. He has no source of gratification independent of sensuality or distinction. Pleasure and ambition are the passions which maintain an entire ascendancy over the heart of unregenerated man, and which begin to exercise their tyranny as soon as he has

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delivered himself from that condition of abject poverty and depression, which allows no scope for their operation, and engrosses every faculty of the understanding in providing by the daily labour for the daily bread.

The caprice or the ingenuity of the human mind may multiply the modes of pursuit and of indulgence ; but every line of worldly conduct is actuated by one or the other of these inclinations, and proposes the gratification of its claims as the result. The infidel may seek to soothe his selfishness either by the medium of his senses or his vanity. He may either become the votary of pleasure, and, however he may refine away its grossness, rank himself as the companion of the vulgar sensualist, who drowns his intellects and depraves his sentiments in the loathsome abominations of the tavern and the

bagnio; or he may enlist himself under the banners of ambition, and make experiment of the envy, the solicitude, and the malignity that are stirring among that busy and incongruous multitude, in which the trophies of the warrior, and the laurels of the poet and the sage, are united in unseemly contact with the fopperies of the frivolous and the motley of the buffoon.—Whatever benefit these things may be capable of affording is fairly open to his endeavours, and perhaps may recompense his assiduity; but to this the man, who separates himself from the hopes and the motives of religion, is absolutely confined by the poverty of the human heart, and the limited range of its affections. If he be dissatisfied with the measure of enjoyment, which these sources may supply, he murmurs against the destiny of his creation, and requires, for

the completion of his happiness, some wider range of faculties, and some more ample modification of existence.

With nothing but the favours of pleasure and ambition to excite or to reward his perseverance, the unbeliever must be content to suffer the anxieties of privation, the labours of acquisition, and the frequent disappointment occasioned by the lubricity with which they elude the hand that is just closed to grasp them. In the absence of these possessions life must necessarily be restless and disturbed. Whether the objects of his pursuit are possessed of a real and a substantial worth, or whether they are recommended by a fictitious and delusive splendour ;—whether the advantages which they promise to bestow are inherent in the things themselves, or the mere idle flourishes of the imagination, is perfectly imma-

terial to the happiness of the man who has not yet been admitted to the privilege of making a personal experiment of their worth or their defects. If it be once imagined that they constitute the sovereign blessings of existence, his mind will inevitably be vexed and agitated in their absence by a painful consciousness of privation. Whether they may or may not avail to enhance the felicity of the affluent; the want of them will exist as a subject of permanent affliction to the indigent. The unbeliever, who is deprived of wealth and of distinction, is separated from that which he esteems as indispensable to the enjoyment of his residence on earth; and, anxious as this condition of murmuring and discontent—of restlessness and jealousy—of solicitude and competition, may appear, this condition is the most favourable that he,

who is without God in the world, can possibly expect. The pursuit is more tolerable than the possession. “Man never is, but always to be blest,” says Pope; and that age of more than youthful credulity, in which he yet believed that the recompenses of pleasure or ambition might overpay the toil by which they are secured;—that luxury might soothe the sense, and pre-eminence exalt the spirit;—that the world might possibly contain some treasures which were worthy of being coveted and sought and won, is the period on which he will look back with envy, when his efforts shall have wrought their consummation, and his hopes encountered their severest disappointment in the apparent fruition of their desires. In either event the exertions of the godless tend to an unprofitable conclusion. If he fail, the attempt without the deed corrodes the

heart with the sense of wasted faculties, and overcasts the character with that pale and invidious moroseness, which so frequently assoils the dignity of age, and renders it as obnoxious to others as burthensome to itself. If he be successful, he only finds a change of ill and a new manner of disquietude ;—he has yet to encounter the inconveniences that accompany possession ;—he has to learn the depreciations of riches, the dissatisfaction of enjoyment, and the anxieties of pre-eminence. These are proved to be infinitely greater than are ever calculated upon during the ardour of pursuit and the excitement of desire. Those who have profited most largely of the delights and of the glories of the world have informed us, by the confessions which their disappointments have extorted, that such things are wholly

irrelevant to the purposes for which they are so diligently sought ; and that—like some distant city, which to the traveller appears a glittering assemblage of temples and of palaces, and only discloses to the inhabitant the obscurity of its tall and narrow streets, and the wretchedness of its airless alleys,—they assume a visionary beauty, which tortures the imagination of the indigent, but fades away at the approach of the more successful adventurer who has advanced near enough to achieve them.

Without recurring to the instances of those who may be regarded as the victims of immoderate indulgence—without considering those martyrs to sensuality who have purchased, by a youth of dissolute excess, a premature, diseased and irreverent old age,—I should say, that it were impossible for any individual,

possessed of the least quickness of perception, to be admitted to the glittering resorts of dissipation, without discovering that those persons are guilty of a most miserable miscalculation, who there sow upon the golden and the barren sands of pleasure, and expect to reap in happiness the increase of their harvest. The casual visitor will find among the frequenters of such scenes, that the smile is habitual and constrained, and acknowledges no sympathy with any native gaiety of heart.—He will perceive that the glittering repartee of their conversation, which appears so captivating to the uninitiated ear, is a mere affair of convention and routine, to which their companions afford the subject, and spleen supplies the wit, and fashion gives the phrase and the expression ; in which an idle and prying curiosity sustains the part of quickness of observation ; in

which ill-nature passes for the nerve, and insinuation for the delicacy, of satire ; and which, however it may relieve the vacuity of indolence by the excitement of malignant emotions, acknowledges no relationship with the liberal and honest flow of genuine hilarity.—He will discover, that the spirits, overtaken by the exorbitant demand of a forced and continued exercise, repair their exhaustion in the intervals of solitude by a proportionate languor and depression ; and that they require the stimulus of wine or opium to brace their enfeebled energies to the endurance of those amusements which habit has rendered necessary and satiety oppressive.—He will perceive, that all those diseases of the imagination, which circulate from the heart and from the brain, by channels too imperceptible for the reach of human remedies, are engendered amid the abundance which sup-

plies the caprices of desire with too immediate a facility of indulgence. He will learn, that even the continuance of ease is irksome to the innate activity of the human faculties ; that it is expressed in indolent lamentations over the burthen and calamities of life ; that it strives to satisfy those mighty energies, which are weary of sloth and incapacitated from any honourable endeavour by the painful suspenses of the gaming-table, or the wicked agitations of adulterous love ; and that, after exhausting every variety of innocent gratification and polite iniquity, it has not unfrequently compelled its victims to seek protection in a voluntary grave against the languors of their delicacy and their refinement*.

* “ Cogita quamdiu eadem feceris ; mori velle non tantum fortis, aut miser, sed etiam *fastidiosus* potest,”—says Seneca ; and the truth of his remark may be read in the *Life of Alfieri*, and in a book almost as true to nature, Miss EDGEWORTH’S *Ennui*.

That happiness which prosperity refuses to the votary of pleasure is not conferred on the votary of ambition. After toiling through honour and dishonour, and good report and evil report, with a perseverance that declares the greatness of his nature in the perversion of its faculties;—after the anxious day and the sleepless night have raised him to that desired eminence, “whose top to climb is certain falling, or so slippery, the fears as bad as falling,” the ambitious painfully discovers that he has been studious of his bane, and “made himself thrice a servant, a servant to the state, a servant to form, and a servant to business: so that he has no freedom, either in his person, or in his actions, or in his time*.” Such was the result of Lord Bacon’s experience; and thousands have born witness to the

* LORD BACON’S *Essay on Great Place*.

correctness of his report.—The ambitious finds in his success that his cares have become complicated, almost beyond the possibility of any human superintendence.—The number of his enemies are increased by their jealousy of his superiority.—No gratitude can secure his friends.—Benefits only tend to excite in them impracticable desires, which refusal converts into malignity.—His exaltation only exposes him as the aim of envy, and the fair mark for censure, and the public theme of calumny. It also deprives him of the richer portion of his anticipated reward ; and placing him in more immediate contact with the evil passions of mankind, teaches him, by the detection of their selfishness and venality, to despise the recompense of popular admiration, for which his labours were undertaken and endured.

“ Great men had need to borrow other men’s opinions to think themselves happy, for if they judge by their own feelings they shall not find it*.”—This remark extends to every species of success, whether in arts or in arms, in politics or in literature. Alexander pining for new worlds to conquer, Buonaparte “ s’ennuyant de cette vieille Europe †,” intimate with sufficient certainty, that the complacency which results from victory is inadequate to allay in the breast of the warrior the diseased avidity of conquest.—If any species of success were exempt from the inconveniences and dissatisfactions of ambition, one might expect to find the man of letters in possession of that enviable distinction. He pursues his object in the

* LORD BACON’S *Essay on Great Place*.

† His reason for attacking Russia.—MADAME DE STAEL *on the French Revolution*, vol. ii. p. 353.

seclusion of his chamber, without any of that hostile collision, by which, in other situations, the individual endeavours to exalt himself by the depression of his compeers. His task is undertaken for the amusement or the instruction of mankind; and, if worthily completed, it would appear that the successful author had none of the alloys of reputation to encounter, but might leisurely commit himself to the enjoyment of an unadulterated fame, and receive the honourable recompense of his industry from the gratitude of a people whom his efforts had delighted or informed.—But these speculations are contradicted by the public acknowledgments of those who are best calculated to decide on their justice or their falsehood.—Not to mention that Ennui, which has been denounced as “the inexorable

tyrant of every soul that thinks, and against which wisdom is less efficient than folly * :”—not to mention the weariness with which the mind toils heavily along upon the conclusion of a work, which was ardently begun and despondingly continued :—not to mention the accidents that accompany publication, the vexation of ignorant praise and of frivolous censure, the silence or the misapprehension of criticism, the witticisms of those whose talents are sufficient to detect the superficial errors of a work, but incapable of appreciating the difficulties, or the skill, or the graces of its execution ; —not to mention these inferior troubles, which disturb the tranquillity that is promised by a life of literature, we find that the very distinction and the

* *L'Ennui* ce triste tyran de toutes les âmes qui pensent, contre lequel la sagesse peut moins que la folie.—BUFFON sur *l'Homme*.

praise, for which all this anxiety is encountered, are despised and overlooked as valueless the moment they are obtained and weighed and measured and appreciated. The complaints of Johnson and Rousseau we will reject as of no authority. They, perhaps, inherited a complexional discontent which made them morbidly sensible to the gall and bitterness of every condition. But Shakspeare,—who was blest with every faculty of the understanding most equally proportioned, and most aptly blended ; who employed them to bright issues ; and who, when the seed was sown and the harvest ripe, perceived the vanity of the produce, and scorned the toil of reaping, and left his works to the gathering of strange hands, and derived no other fruit from his celebrity than the melancholy reflection of having “ made

himself a motley to the view* :” but Pope,—of whose mind good sense was the most striking characteristic, whose few opponents were silenced by the admiration of the wisest and the best, whose fame was constantly returning to him in dedication and flattery and the applause of theatres rising at his entrance, and who, at the conclusion of his career, forgot these coveted distinctions, and declared, that “the life† of a wit is a warfare upon earth; and that the spirit of the learned world is such, that to attempt to serve it in any way, one must have the constancy of a martyr, and a resolution to suffer for its sake :”—surely these

* Sonnet 110.—

“ Alas ! ’tis true, I have gone here and there,

“ And made myself a motley to the view”—

All the sonnets express a carelessness of fame whenever the topic falls in his way, and his neglect of his works proves that he was no hypocrite in these sentiments.

† Preface to his collected Works.

examples speak with most forcible conviction, that the applauses of mankind, which so many hours are laboriously wasted to obtain, are less than superfluous to our happiness; and that Buffon did not speak the sentiments of a solitary individual, but of the whole body of illustrious and celebrated persons, when he pronounced,—in a sentence to which Lord Byron* has assented, and which Sir Walter Scott† has paraphrased:

* Knowledge is not happiness, and science,
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.—MANFRED.

† The parallel passage is in *Rokeby*—It is one of Sir Walter Scott's most beautiful common-places:—

“ Ere the youth strip him for the race,
Shew the conditions of the chase,
Two sisters by the goal are set,
Cold Disappointment and Regret;
One disenchant the winner's eyes,
And strips of all its worth the prize.
While one augments its gaudy show,
More to enhance the loser's woe.
The victor sees his fairy gold
Transformed, when won, to drossy mould;
But still the vanquished mourns his loss,
And rues as gold, that glittering dross.”

“ Que la gloire, ce puissant mobile de toutes les grandes âmes, et qu’on voyait de loin comme un but éclatant, qu’on s’efforçait d’atteindre par des actions brillantes et des travaux utiles, n’est plus qu’un objet sans attrait pour ceux qui en ont approché, et un fantôme vain et trompeur pour les autres qui sont restés dans l’éloignement.”

There is no exemption from the universal scheme of disappointment. No accumulation can satiate the desires of the heart; and yet the least excess beyond the limits that nature has appointed overcharges the weakness of those organs by which the desires of the heart are to be fulfilled. The insatiable passion always exceeds in its demands the restricted powers of those corporeal faculties which are appointed to minister to its claims.—Even from those whose con-

ditions have been most lavishly endowed by the partial prodigality of fortune ; who have been permitted to select, to vary and to combine, all that is most exquisite and prized among the blandishments of pleasure and the glories of ambition ; who have stood upon the earth as the favourites of destiny with all the treasures of the earth, wealth, power, fame, beauty, honour, cast down before their feet and subservient to their disposal :—still, even from these, it is declared, that all united are imperfect and defective, void and inefficient ; and our compassion is entreated for the splendid sufferers in the same language of querulous and monotonous disappointment.—“Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.”—Man hastens to the resorts of sensuality to relieve the cravings of his inferior nature ; and his appetites are nourished by his indulgence, and

enhanced by his concessions. He aspires to pre-eminence ; he attempts the tumults of ambition ; and he surrounds himself with a pageantry of cares that multiply the anxieties of his day, and put to flight the timid slumbers of his pillow.—“ Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.”—He proves that the allurements of the earth are valueless, yet he still submits to their attraction, till his passion, increasing in its importunity, becomes the tyrant of his reason and his will ;—till it assumes a savage despotism, and enforces compliance with its exactions, and demands as its enormous tribute the security and the health and the welfare of existence.—“ Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.”—Still the sated and melancholy voluptuary is dragged unwillingly along, by the compulsion of his lust, or of his gluttony, to the participation of vices that revolt him ;

—still, though disabused of all the flattering expectations of his heart, the ambitious yearns after the clamour and the gaze of multitudes, while the acclamations of the people bewilder and astound the ear to which they are addressed, and while he himself is grieving beneath the burthen of the insignia that provokes their ignorant and tumultuous admiration.

—“Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.”

—Such was the important moral, which, amid all the splendid exaggerations of their fortunes, was uttered by Severus* and by Solomon† from the thrones of Rome and of Jerusalem. From their painful elevation, from the pomp of courts, from the obedience of nations, from the submission of tributary states, from the incense of flattery, from the tranquillity of unrivalled power, from the contemplation

* *Omnia fui et nihil expedit.* † *Ecclesiastes*, ch. xii. v. 8.

of accumulating opulence, they derived this simple and invariable conclusion, that “all is vanity,”—that the cup of pleasure only sparkles at the brim,—and that the sun, which seems to shine so brightly on the snows of the mountain-top, warms only in the valley beneath.

It is irrelevant to my present purpose minutely to investigate the causes of that lassitude and discontent, which, in the worldly mind, appear to be invariably connected with the acquisition of the treasures of the world. It is acknowledged on every side, that they frustrate the purposes for which they are desired.—Perhaps the disappointment may be occasioned by the anxieties that accompany prosperity, and which are inseparable from possession, though they are very rarely calculated upon in the ardour of pursuit:—or, perhaps, it may be attri-

buted to the original propensity which nature has implanted in the heart, as a perpetual impulse to exertion, which, according to Montaigne*, “abstracts our attention from the enjoyment of the present to amuse us with the promises of the future,” and which disturbs the imagination with its superfluous activity as soon as we have reaped the harvests of the earth, and are conscious of no ulterior prospects to occupy the restlessness of the anticipating faculty of our minds:—or, perhaps, a more worthy and elevated cause may be discovered in the vastness of the human soul which, created for eternity, and instinct with immortal energies, is impatient of those attain-

* “Nous ne sommes jamais chez nous ; nous sommes toujours au-delà. La crainte, le désir, l'espérance nous élance vers l'avenir, et nous dérobent le sentiment et la considération de ce qui est, pour nous amuser à ce qui sera.”—MONTAIGNE, liv. i. chap. 3.

ments that are less imperishable than itself, and, designed to contemplate and adore the infinite perfections of its Author, in vain endeavours, in the absence of religious hope, to supply the aching void of sentiment by any combination of those objects which in themselves are limited and defective.

But whether the dissatisfaction that the soul experiences, amid the most affluent accumulation of temporalities, be derived particularly from any one of the causes I have recounted, or from an union of the whole, it is evident that the Christian is exempted from their operation, by the motives of his conduct, the object of his desires, and the aim of his exertions.— If others, at the brightest and most luxuriant crisis of their fortunes, lament over the unexpected solitudes of a state which they had anticipated as the conclusion of their anxiety and their toil, the disciple

of the Redeemer has no such miscalculations to detect. All the difficulties of his task are honestly exposed to his inspection. They are connected with his first, rude and inexperienced efforts ; and they disappear as he gradually acquires the dominion of his passions, and obtains the habit and facility of virtue.—If others open to themselves a new source of infelicity in the very fruition of their earthly prospects, and, after attaining the accomplishment of their desires, become distressed from vacuity of occupation ; the object of the Christian's emulation, alluring from beyond the grave, interests the prospective activity of the mind, by a pursuit as enduring as his existence, and which constantly encourages his perseverance by livelier presentiments of joy.—If others are oppressed and agitated by the restless consciousness of faculties inadequately employed, and of energies unworthily

consumed, the faithful disciple of Christ is delivered from those occasions of disquietude; for his affections, his hopes and his exertions, are strenuously directed to the achievement of an end, as infinite as his capacities, as eternal as his nature, as blest as the destiny of angels, and as glorious as the throne of God.

But, with these advantages immediately resulting from the nature of his pursuit, and which he possesses as an additional and exclusive interest in his existence, the Christian derives a real increase of happiness from those accessions of temporal prosperity, which to others only communicate a toil of insipid entertainment, and a burthen of unprofitable splendour.—Those acquisitions of fame or wealth, of place or honour, which to the children of the world are only golden in expectation, and prove worse than tinsel on possession, to the Christian

really do contribute something of substantial gratification and valuable enjoyment.

“ All things work together for the good of those* ” whose lives are religiously devoted to the service of the Almighty ; and, among the innumerable privileges which the Deity has appointed as the indefeasible inheritance of those that love him, he has ordained, that the righteous should achieve by virtue the ends which are ineffectually pursued by vice ; that, while they renounce themselves, and only seek to glorify their God, by promoting the benefit of others, they should fall undesignedly upon that happiness which escapes the solicitous exertions of the selfish ; that they should exhaust the sweets which are attached to the delights and the glories of the world, and abandon all the dregs and the bitterness of the cup

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 28.

to be drained by the sensualist, the ambitious and the voluptuary:—whatever is really valuable in the acquisitions of pleasure or of success, may be enumerated among the uncovenanted and supervenient recompenses of that godliness, which, says the Apostle of the Gentiles, is “profitable unto all things*.”

Though the objects which excite and frustrate the affections of the ungodly heart are of themselves insufficient to our happiness, they are very far from meriting the reproach of utter worthlessness with which their votaries would condemn them in the bitterness of their disappointment or their satiety. According to the corrupt and perverted purposes for which they are generally sought, they are unable to fulfil the expectations that are awakened by them. They are not happiness, but may be rendered the means of

* 1 Tim. ch. iv. v. 8.

happiness.—When the Christian, wholly occupied in his immediate duties, with a generous indifference and an honest carelessness of the event to which they may conduct him, passes onward in the direct and the undeviating path of right, without any other motive to his exertions than a devout solicitude to perform the commandments of his God; and to confirm the happiness of his immortality:—when the Christian, thus holily and importantly employed, permits himself in the hour of vacancy to participate in any of those pleasures and amusements which the benevolence of the Creator has so liberally strewn about the path of our pilgrimage, he comes with a suddenness and a freshness to the enjoyment, by which the zest of all its valuable qualities is heightened and enhanced. The innocence of the unburthened heart leaves his bosom free for the play and swell of the emotions of

happiness. His mind, unoppressed by any painful recollections, surrenders itself with a boyish confidence to the caprices of the imagination. He has not prepared for himself a disappointment by any of those over-coloured and exaggerated anticipations which torment the impatience of the inactive, and defeat fruition, and render the reality insipid. The restraints of diligence confer a sweetness on the liberty of relaxation. The temperance, which, with an amiable severity, interposes against every indulgence, that is not virtuously required to restore the spring and vigour of the faculties, recalls him to the important duties of his station, before he has approached the limits at which excess is punished in satiety; and leaves him, with all the healthy and simple tastes of nature unimpaired, again to recreate himself, with the same innocence, with the same viva-

city, and with the same susceptibility of delight, whenever the cessation of labour may allow no dishonourable opportunity of amusement.—With regard, therefore, to the ordinary pleasures and relaxations of society, the Christian, by the felicitous interchange of toil and rest, each relieving and heightening the other, inherits a more ample measure of gratification: from his abridged and temperate permission, than the voluptuary receives from an indulgence that is delivered of every restraint of religion and of morality and of prudence.—The Christian expatiates in a fair enclosure of which the boundaries are artificially concealed, and, forbearing to approach the interdicted limits, he looks around with gratitude and content upon his sphere of pleasure, and is delighted with its imaginary extent; while the voluptuary, disclaiming every religious restriction,

is impelled by the impetuosity of his desires to the utmost verge of its confines, and, discovering the narrowness of his range, and the paucity of his resources, impatiently beats his breast against the extreme barrier, oppressed by the satiety of the body, and agitated by the insatiability of the passions.

But, if the devout disciple of the Redeemer, who, in the purity of his faith, mingles no austerities of superstition with the beauty of his godliness, and “so uses the world as not abusing it,” possesses the superiority over the sensualist in the enjoyment of those gratifications, which may be enumerated among the pleasures of sense; there is another and a more elevated class of pleasures which may almost be named as his peculiar and exclusive property—I mean, the pleasures which are excited by works of art and imagination.—Others may very fairly

estimate the dexterity of their execution. They may decide on the proportions of the statuary ;—on the expression of the poet ;—on the forms and tints, the arrangement and the shadows of the painter. They may measure the qualities of the artist by an accurate comparison of his productions, with those of the most celebrated masters of antiquity. They may calculate his excellencies and his defects, and appoint his rank upon the schedule of renown. They may survey with a cultivated eye, and approve with an elaborate precision. But this frigid and artificial skill of discerning between the valuable and the void, is wholly independent of any perception of the delight which the artist was desirous of inspiring. It is a mere cold operation of the intellect unbiassed by any emotions of the heart, distinct from any sentiment of beauty, and destitute of any, even the slightest,

sympathy with the genius or inspiration of the creative mind. The pleasure which is received by this kind of critical approval, from the finest combination of forms, or the most melting harmony, or the most splendid bursts of poetic enthusiasm, consists in the gratification of personal vanity, in the sense of superior knowledge, in the display of technical discrimination, and in the exercise of a delegated authority to arbitrate for the opinions of the multitude.—This estimation of the works of art, which is rather the intercourse of acquaintance than of affection, is consistent with the narrowness or the depravity of the mind, and the grossest corruption of the heart.—But there is a higher method of appreciation—the appreciation of taste and feeling.—There are to whom these things appeal with a resistless emphasis; over whom they exercise a magic potency;

with whom they seem to hold a silent and an eloquent and a deep communion; whom they touch with all the varying emotions, that obey the call and are subservient to the dominion of the poet or the painter, whom they move to tears of involuntary pity, or chill with terror, or excite by the virtuous glow of indignation. The mere cold and vulgar knowledge of art is as distinct from this genuine sensibility of its powers, as the perception of the minute philosopher, who looks upon the tints of the iris, and resolves its glories into the refraction of the sun-beams on the drops of the falling shower, differs from the holier and loftier sentiment of the man, who, dismissing from his mind the concurrence of secondary causes, as he casts his eyes upon the bow in the heavens, is warned of its religious intimations, and awakened to the contemplation of the mercies of his God.—

This deeper and more intimate apprehension of the works of genius is the result of character and disposition. The delight is correspondent to the sensibility of the heart, the vividness of its emotions, and its benevolent willingness to admire. The grateful excitement, which the efforts of the artist, the musician, or the poet are calculated to produce, is in proportion to the healthy tenderness of our moral sense, and the spirituality of our affections.—As “faith purifies the heart,” as it subdues the predominance of the senses, as it abridges the ascendancy of selfishness, as it cherishes the kind and gentle affections of our nature, it prepares and elevates the soul for the enjoyment of the pleasures of the imagination. “Since I have known God in a saving manner,” says Martyn, the saint and the apostle of our times, “painting, poetry,

and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose to be a taste for them; for religion has refined my mind, and made me more susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful*.”—Let not the voluptuary despise this abundant source of gratification. His contempt for the pleasures of the imagination is as if the blind should ridicule the blessings and the glories of the light. He has deprived himself of the means of appreciating their value. Their charms are apprehended by an internal sense, of which he has deadened the perceptions; and, amid the delirium of that riot, in which his health of body and energies of mind, his prosperity on earth and his hopes of heaven are dissipated, he has become incapable of estimating those innocent, unobtrusive and intellectual enjoyments which are so dearly prized by the disciple

* *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn.*

of the Redeemer, and which augment the happiness of his life, while they advance the interests of his immortality.

Thus eminently favoured with respect to the pleasures of existence, it must also be remembered that the Christian may possibly become possessed of opulence and distinction.—Though he scorns the petty arts by which patronage is conciliated to the undeserving, the policy of cunning, of flattery and intrigue ; though he is above availing himself of that subserviency to the great which seeks the shortest and the easiest road to riches and advancement, still his disadvantages, in the competitions of the world, are not so insurmountable as the children of the world may be tempted to conceive.—Success may be the honest recompense of his exertions, and, if he does succeed, prosperity is recommended to him by circum-

stances, which do not promise any increase of happiness to others. As it formed no part of his anticipated reward, or, at all events, was but loosely calculated upon among the possible contingencies of his human pilgrimage, he enjoys whatever benefit it may afford with that predisposition to be pleased, which is excited by the presence of any sudden and unexpected acquisition. As his conscience acquits him of every base compliance or dishonourable stratagem, the possession of wealth or fame, of honour or of power, while it is gratefully acknowledged among the liberalities of Providence, may, without presumption, be considered as an encouragement to religious hope, as an earnest of his eternal recompense, and as an indication of the Almighty's favourable reception of his obedience.—The reputation in which there is no falsehood or hy-

pocrisy to be detected, which is honestly obtained by strenuous and continued efforts, which is guiltless of those collusions that occasionally raise the undeserving to the distinction of a transient and anxious notoriety, communicates to the Christian's soul a delightful encouragement to exertion, and that innocent complacency of mind, which the Almighty has mercifully attached to the contemplation of our prosperous endeavours. Acting on the principle of duty, for the instruction or the improvement of his fellow-creatures, the fame which remunerates his diligence informs him by the voice of public gratitude that his diligence has not been superfluously employed. The honours to which he may arrive can add but little to the dignity of his virtue,—for his actions constitute his best nobility,—but that he has attained them, revives their lustre, restores them to popular re-

spect, enhances in the imagination of every young aspirant the value of their acquisition, and delivers an example to mankind that invigorates the influence of morals, by conspicuously illustrating the distinction and the reverence to which they lead. All those importunate cares and complicated transactions, which are classed by others among the evils of pre-eminence, are considered by the man whose breast is animated by the affections of the Gospel among its most valuable privileges and endowments. They constitute the very rewards for which he is contented to endure the anxieties, the decorations, and the publicity of his elevation. With the love of God and man predominating within him, his station, and the important duties of his station, present the master passion of his heart with more advantageous opportunities of gratification, with a more extensive range of use-

fulness, and with more ample facilities of benevolence.—And at the close of all : when old age comes over him ; when he is no longer capable of mingling in the active negotiations of the busy, and his infirmities shall counsel his retirement, that slow and lingering residue of life, which to the unbeliever is a useless and unprofitable void, a burthen that hangs heavily about him, and for which he wants an object and an occupation, still retains for the faithful disciple of the Saviour all that is essential and important in the interests of human existence. The care of his salvation still continues. It is no longer “to be worked out with fear and trembling,” amid the haunts of the ambitious and the seductions of power, but in a more appropriate field of action, and in duties more correspondent to the weakness and the reverence of age. He has secured to himself an hour of

meditation, ere he fall into the silence of the grave. He has withdrawn from the interests of time, that he may be wholly occupied with the interests of eternity. He has surrendered the toil of life into younger and abler hands ; and in self-examination, in acts of piety and charity and devotion, in eradicating the last lingering affections of the earthly man, he dedicates the serene conclusion of his days to the service of his God ; and departs from the concerns of this life, like the sun in its decline, which,—after spreading an invigorating warmth about the earth, and prospering the industry of man, and looking down upon the tumult of occupation,—sinks at eve, in silent majesty behind the mountains, and casts upwards to the heavens the golden radiance of its departing light.

PART II.

CHRISTIAN OPINIONS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN
ESTABLISHED BY THE UNAIDED POWERS OF
THE REASON.



CHRISTIAN OPINIONS NOT DISCOVERABLE
BY REASON.

“ IT were less difficult,” says Plutarch, “ to build a city in the air, than to constitute a state without a belief in the existence of the Gods*.”—And to this maxim of the speculative philosopher, may be added the confirmation of Necker’s experience, who declares that “ no man can have taken any active part in public affairs, or have observed mankind in their constant state of rivalry and opposition, without perceiving that the wisest governments require the co-operation of some invisible influence, that may maintain a secret ascendancy over the conscience†.” This

* Plutarch contra Coloten.

† NECKER *Importance des Opinions Religieuses*.—“ On ne peut avoir pris un part active à la conduite des affaires publiques ; on ne pent en avoir fait l’objet snivi de son atten-

supernatural support, which is so indispensable to the preservation of our happiness on earth, can only be derived from the popular belief in the existence of a superintending God and a state of future retribution. These are the great fundamental truths of which we are assured by revelation, to which every other doctrine or mystery of religion is subservient, and which, by whatever name the Deity may be invoked, or amid whatever circumstances the imagination may have feigned the distribution of his judgments, still remain, under every form of national faith, as the conservative principles of national tranquillity.—The fear of God and of a future judgment constitute those first, essential

tion ; on ne peut avoir comparé les divers rapports de ce grand ensemble avec la disposition naturelle des esprits et des caractères ; on ne peut enfin avoir observé les hommes dans leurs constantes rivalités, sans avoir apperçu combien les gouvernemens les plus sages ont besoin d'être secondés par l'influence du ressort invisible qui agit en secret sur les consciences."—Introduction, p. 3.

doctrines of religion, which Plato has declared it impossible to overthrow without violating the foundations of society*.

For these opinions to operate any extensive consequences on popular conduct, they must be entertained with a perfect assurance of their truth. It is not sufficient that they should be doubtfully regarded as uncertain, and speculative probabilities.—A strict compliance with the moral precepts of the Messiah has sometimes been demanded by the ministers of Revelation on motives of prudence and precaution, because the requisitions of the Gospel are easy to be accomplished, and its retributions may possibly be true. In a religious light these inducements are deceitful.—Such arguments to obedience are in opposition to the very terms of the Christian covenant; they hold a word of promise to the ear, which, if the revela-

* PLATO *de Legibus.*, 10.

tion be divine, will certainly be broken to the hopes ; they dispense with the necessity and the efficacy of faith, by which alone the blessings of redemption can be apprehended ; they omit the need of spiritual assistance to our infirmities ; and they presume that a state of unsinning and meritorious obedience may be attained by fallen and unregenerated man, acting on his own ability, without any lofty principle or holy motive, from a cold and heartless calculation of chances, and a mercenary comparison of his present sacrifices with the value of his future contingencies.—There is surely no necessity for my repeating that these are neither the dispositions or the means by which the glories of the Christian's heaven are to be secured. But, admitting for a moment that those everlasting recompenses, which the Almighty has appointed as the reward of charity and faith, might be

accomplished, without the sanctification of any holier impulses, by a mere external compliance with the letter of the law, is it probable that any one, who entertained a suspicion of their truth, would be persuaded to make experiment of this formal method of obtaining them?—Can it be supposed that any unbeliever would be induced “to eschew the evil,” to which his inclinations forcibly solicited him, and “to do the good,” which his indolence or his interest opposed, by the supposition that his actions might *perhaps* be visible to the eye of his Creator, to whose judgments he *perhaps* might be accountable, in some state of undefinable retribution, which *perhaps* might be prepared beyond the grave?—Is it to be believed that any individual, actuated by the feelings and the sentiments of ordinary men, would be deterred from the commission of a sin, to which his unregenerated nature vio-

lently impelled him, by the recollection of such vague and inconclusive considerations?—No man would postpone the certain, tangible and immediate advantages of this world to the treasures of the next, if the joys of heaven were as problematical as they are remote, and as uncertain as they are viewless.—Such conduct would be to the highest degree irrational.—Unless the existence of a future state is an object of implicit and confident persuasion, it neither will or ought to be admitted as an inducement to the resignation of the interests and gratifications of the present. There are no maxims of human wisdom which would instruct us to abandon fruition for a doubtful hope; and reality for speculation. On the contrary, they would all direct us to avail ourselves of the present pleasure or emolument. They would exhort us to enjoy the rapid moments as they pass; to se-

cure, in a life so fragile, so evanescent and so dear, every indulgence that opportunity might offer, and to allow no dark conjectures of a possible hereafter to impede the liberal current of our inclinations.—The wisdom of the world would warn us to avoid every visionary apprehension, and exclaim to each of us, with the emphatic eloquence of the heathen moralist :

*Sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi
Spem longam reseces ; dum loquimur fingerit invida
Ætas, carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero *.*

But, if it be requisite that the essential doctrines of religion should be received without suspicion, before they can be reasonably insisted upon as motives for the direction of the conduct, it is also necessary that they should be established by some sufficient arguments, which might powerfully impress the understanding, and

* HORACE, lib. i. Ode 11.

which might be continually recalled to recollection as encouragements to the faith of the virtuous, and as warnings to the negligence of the bad.—In times of rude and imperfect civilization such arguments would not be needed. Hume has correctly said, that there exists in man “an universal propensity to believe*,” and with Gibbon it may be added, that

* “The universal propensity to believe in invisible intelligent power, if not an original instinct being at least a general attendant of human nature, may be considered as a kind of mark or stamp which the divine workman has set upon his work.”—*Natural History of Religion*, sect. 15.—That such an instinct exists Montesquieu considers as sufficiently proved by the single sentence which forms his chapter on the subject : —“ L’Homme pieux et l’Athée parlent toujours de religion, l’un parle de ce qu’il aime et l’autre de ce qu’il craint.”—*L’Esprit des Loix*. This impulse is frequently so imperious as to resist the withering impulse even of atheism itself. When the infatuated disciple has been instructed in the schools of sophistry, to “say in his heart there is no God,” he has by no means delivered himself from every spiritual apprehension. The innate and instinctive principle of religious faith will employ itself on other objects; and he may be superstitious though he has ceased to be devout. Ammianus reports of his contemporaries, “that they discovered the most puerile credulity, while they impiously denied the existence of a celestial power.”

this movement of instinctive faith is “so urgent in the vulgar that the fall of any system of mythology will most probably be succeeded by the introduction of some other mode of superstition*.”—Speak to unenlightened man of a creating God, of a superintending and directing Providence, of an after-life of punishment or reward, and such sublime communications are heard with reverence, and admitted without suspicion. They are authenticated by his sense of weakness, by their harmony with his purest affections and his loftiest impulses, by his anxiety to penetrate the obscurities of the future.—“Often†,” said a Thane in the idolatrous court of Edwin, while they discussed the policy of admitting the Chris-

* GIBBON'S *Decline and Fall*, ch. xvi. He mentions the decay of Paganism as a cause of the rapid extension of the Gospel.

† LINGARD'S *History of England*, vol. i. p. 92.

tian missionaries, “ Often, O King, in the depth of winter, while you are feasting with your Thanes, and the fire is blazing on the hearth in the midst of the hall, you have seen a bird pelted by the storm enter at one door and escape at the other. During its passage it was visible ; but whence it came, or whither it went, you knew not. Such to me appears the life of man. He walks the earth for a few years : but what precedes his birth, or what is to follow after his death, we cannot tell. Undoubtedly, if the new religion can unfold these important secrets, it must be worthy our attention.” —The Gospel did elucidate these mysterious questions ; it tranquilized this anxiety of doubt ; it declared the origin, the conditions and the destiny of human existence ; and the half-enlightened people discovered the evidences

of its truth in the instinctive claims and aspirations of nature, and demanded no stronger reasons for the faith which was in them.

But, as we improve in science, these convictions of the heart appear too indefinite to satisfy the understanding. To a certain extent Rousseau was justified in affirming, that “ L’Homme qui pense est un animal dépravé*.” From the tree of knowledge he gathers the fruit of good and evil.—As he cultivates his intellectual faculties, he learns to mistrust his instincts. The original impressions of his mind appear to him as prepossessions to be eradicated, rather than as intimations to be religiously respected. The existence of a God, or of a future state, obtains no credit with refined and educated man, on account of the universality of its reception and his own tendency to

* *Discours sur l’Origine et Fondement de l’Inégalité parmi les Hommes.*

subscribe to the belief. He attributes the general consent to the force of popular prejudice rather than to the persuasions of the still small voice of the Deity within. He will submit to the suggestions neither of fear or hope, unless the event which they anticipate be confirmed by arguments that may warrant his expectations. He only consents to that which is demonstrated. He distrusts the inspirations of nature. He endeavours to investigate their secret and mysterious movements by the light of a philosophy, before which they shrink, and perish.—He imitates the crime, and he is visited with the punishment of Psyche.

As long as the being of a God and the retributions of eternity are connected with a divine revelation, as in the case of Christianity, the reason finds itself in possession of the means of satisfying its doubts. The evidences of their truth are

investigated and decided upon with the consideration of the arguments that prove the existence, the miracles and the inspiration of the teacher who delivered them. They become as it were points of history, and are established by the same testimonies as are required for the confirmation of any other historical relation. But, when this ground of confidence is withdrawn, the understanding is left to wander over the illimitable sea of speculation, and seek some other foundation on which they may be raised.—The reason must then put its faculties to the proof. It must try whether it “can by searching find out God.” It must separate the two predominant, essential articles of religious faith into a variety of consecutive propositions, and endeavour, one by one, to discover for them a satisfactory demonstration.—Let us examine what success

the reason might anticipate for itself in this difficult and indispensable investigation.

OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEITY.

Is there a God?—It appears impossible to look upward on the glory of the heavens, and around us on the beauty and fertility of the earth, and entertain a doubt of the existence of a contriving and creating power. It appears consistent with our ordinary experience to suppose that such effects must have proceeded from a cause; and, as there is an admirable correspondence and design discoverable in the component parts, it again appears reasonable to suppose that they received their origin from the hand of an intelligent Creator. These conjectures are authorized by revelation; and to the mind, which Christianity has predisposed for their reception, they assume the cha-

racter of self-evident propositions. Informed of his existence and his attributes by the benevolence of the Divinity himself, we find the testimonies of his being in the wonders and the beauties of creation, and imagine, that the knowledge might be naturally deduced from the presence of those objects, by which the truth of the revealed fact is corroborated. But we no sooner cease to acknowledge the sacred authority of religion, than those arguments, which we had regarded as conclusive, appear to be suddenly divested of their force and their persuasion. The propositions on which we had relied as indisputable axioms are degraded into problematical conjectures.—Is there a God?—We can advance no reason for the support of this belief, which has not been continually adduced and controverted, and adduced and controverted again.—Is there a God?—In the

discussion of this question there are those who estimate the probabilities as favourable to such an hypothesis ; there are those who consider them as inclining to the contrary supposition ; and again, there are others who, like D'Alembert*, regard the arguments on either side as so equally and indiscriminately poised, that they are sensible of no preponderance, and are left bewildered in a state of philosophical uncertainty. — Is there a God?—If any natural aspirations of the soul, if any gratitude for the important privileges of life, if any consciousness of weakness, or desire of protection, or dread of annihilation shall prepossess the heart with a persuasion of his existence, we must learn to prevaricate with our sentiments, and studiously conceal our faith from the de-

* J'ai assez connu d'Alembert pour affirmer qu'il était sceptique en tout, les mathématiques exceptées. Il n'aurait pas plus prononcé qu'il n'y avait point de religion qu'il n'aurait prononcé qu'il y a un Dieu.—LA HARPE.

tection of the mighty masters of unbelief. Such an avowal would render us obnoxious to the persecution of enmity and ridicule and contempt. It would subject us to infinite oppression. We should be derided as beings who had fallen upon an unpropitious age ; and who yet retained, in the society of the wise, the superstitions of the ignorant. We should incur the imputation of that second childishness, with which Diderot reproached the acknowledged theism of Voltaire*. We should be stunned with such clamorous upbraidings as were vociferated against La Harpe†, when La Lande and his disciples were heard glorying in their ungodliness, and asserting that atheism was the only true philosophy.—We should be

* “ Le pauvre Voltaire radote un peu, il avouât l'autre jour qu'il croyait à l'être de Dieu.”—DIDEROT *Correspondance*.

† See the Note to La Harpe's Introduction of his Volumes,—*De la Philosophie du dix-huitième siècle*.

pursued with such shouts of insulting imprecation as those which reverberated through the hall of the Institute, when the eloquent St. Pierre* announced his principles of faith, and which followed the old man with tumultuous violence

* In the year 1798, at a meeting of the Institute, St. Pierre had been charged by the class of morals to make a report upon the Memoirs which had been written on the prize question, "What institutions are the most proper to form the basis of public morals?"—When at the conclusion of his report he announced his own religious principles, a cry of fury was heard from all parts of the hall: some jested, and asked when he had seen God, and what was his form; others derided his credulity; the most moderate addressed him with expressions of contempt. From ridicule they proceeded to outrage; they insulted his age; they charged him with dotage and superstition, and threatened to expel him from an assembly of which he had rendered himself unworthy. There were some who carried their madness so far as to challenge him to a duel, in order to prove, at the point of the sword, that there was no God. He vainly attempted to make himself heard amid the tumult. They refused to listen to him; and Cabanis, in a transport of rage, cried out, "I swear there is no God, and I demand that his name be never again pronounced within these walls."—St. Pierre would hear no more; but saying calmly to this last opponent, "Your master, Mirabeau, would have blushed at the words you have uttered," retired without waiting a reply; and the assembly continued to debate not if there were a God, but if they would allow his name to be mentioned within their walls.

after he had escaped the fury of his opponents, and left the enraged Cabanis swearing that there was no God, and demanding that his name might never again be pronounced within the walls of the Assembly.—Where is the Deist, who in the face of such a perilous opposition will not tremble to venture on the profession of his belief?—Will he not learn to blush at his own ignorant credulity?—Will he not be ashamed of his adherence to so antiquated a sentiment, when he finds that his obnoxious faith is exploded as a prejudice by even the very lowest of the people; that atheism is the favourite despair of our alleys and our prison-houses; that even Ings and Thistlewood conspired without the apprehension of an avenging Deity; and that the rude assassin of the Duke de Berri, familiar with the easy arguments of ungodliness, scorned to dread the retributions of a Creator, of whose

existence he was not sufficiently assured *? —Who on so speculative a question will voluntarily involve himself in all the solitudes of controversy, and assert the confidence of his religious dependance, while he is superciliously informed by the youngest of the unbelievers, that “the being of a God is a mere veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves,” and “of which every reflecting mind must acknowledge a deficiency of proof †?”

* When the murderer of the Duke de Berri was reminded of an avenging God, he replied, “Dieu n’est qu’un mot ; il n’est jamais venu sur la terre.”—“Cette parole,”—says Mennais, “est bien propre, sous plus d’un rapport, à faire naître de profondes réflexions. Dans l’esprit de ce misérable, l’existence de Dieu se liait à sa venue sur la terre. Il n’était pas venu, selon lui, donc, il n’existait pas. Tant il est vrai qu’il faut aux peuples un Dieu *réellement présent*, un Dieu qui se soit manifesté d’une manière sensible, qui ait *venu* parmi les hommes et *conversé* avec eux. Il n’y a point de déisme pour les nations.”—MENNAIS *sur la Religion*, vol. ii. p. 21.

† *Queen Mab*, p. 128 of the Notes.

OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEITY.

It appears then that the reason is not capable of affording such indisputable proofs of the being of a God, as would warrant our proceeding to deduce from the certainty of his existence any motive for the regulation of the conduct.—The unassisted mind stumbles at the very threshold of the inquiry.—But let it be imagined, for a moment, that all mankind should coincide in the reception of this truth, and agree in deprecating any farther discussion of the question, still the reason has made but a very inconsiderable advance towards the establishment of the most material opinion of our religion.—It may admit, as fact, what it acknowledges itself incompetent to prove, and confess, that there is a Divinity above us. But it is necessary to prescribe the attributes of this Divinity; and in what

region of the world are the people to be discovered who have been enabled, by the simple light of nature, to ascend to the conception of his perfections?—Of what has the unassisted mind been capable but of inventing some tremendous Ashtoreth or some hideous Juggernaut?—It has made a wild assemblage of the circumstances that are most appalling to the instincts of our nature, and conceived that it had approximated the resemblance of the Deity, and endowed him with fit attributes, and addressed him with appropriate offerings, when it had raised his image of a colossal and terrific magnitude; when it had ascribed to his nature the exaggerated violence of human passion; when it had worshipped him with libations of human blood and the shrieks of expiring victims; when it had collected about his temple the objects that weigh heaviest on the imagination and strike a

chill and horror to the soul.—Perhaps it may be alleged that there are exceptions to this account.—There are exceptions. Men have varied in the qualities and the dispositions that they have attributed to their idols. They have painted them after the pictures of their own minds; and, occasionally, they have deified effeminacy and lust, instead of ferocity and rapine.—Or it may be said, that just and elevated conceptions of the greatness and the power of the Almighty were entertained by several of the ancient philosophers; who were indebted to no other aids for their discoveries than the common faculties of the understanding.—Most certainly, they were in possession of a very extraordinary knowledge of the divine nature. St. Paul alleges it as one of his severest accusations against them, that, when “they knew God they glorified

him not as God, neither were thankful*.”
—But, though the writings of Plato or of Xenophon, of Cicero or of Seneca, bear witness to the unity and spirituality and perfection of the Creator,—it must be remembered, that such opinions were but the uncertain conjectures of a few, and opposed by the plausible speculations of others; that they were cautiously advanced in private among the friends and disciples of those who professed them, and externally abjured, by a scrupulous compliance with the rites and ceremonies of idolatry; and it also must be remembered, that the simple fact of such opinions being entertained, can by no means be admitted as a proof that they were self-acquired.

“Deism, or the principles of natural worship,” says Dryden, a man not ill-

* Romans, ch. i. v. 21.

calculated to appoint the limits by which the unaided powers of the intellect are circumscribed,—“ Deism, or the principles of natural worship, are only the faint remnants or dying flames of revealed religion in the posterity of Noah ; and our modern philosophers, nay, and some of our philosophizing divines, have too much exalted the faculties of our souls, when they have maintained that, by their force, mankind has been able to find out that there is one supreme Agent, or intellectual Being, which we call God ; that praise and prayer are his due worship ; and the rest of those deducements, which I am confident are the remote effects of revelation, and unattainable by our discourse, I mean as simply considered, and without the benefit of divine illumination : so that we have not lifted up ourselves to God by the weak pinions of our reason,

but he has been pleased to descend to us ; and what Socrates said of him, what Plato writ, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah. That there is something above us, some principle of motion, our reason can apprehend, though it cannot discover what it is by its own virtue. And indeed it is very improbable that we, who by the strength of our faculties cannot enter into the knowledge of any being, not so much as of our own, should be able to find out by them that supreme nature which we cannot otherwise define than by saying it is Infinite ; as if infinite were definable, or infinity a subject for our narrow understanding. They who would prove religion by reason do but weaken the cause which they endeavour to support : it is to

take away the pillars from our faith, and to prop it only with a twig; it is to design a tower like that of Babel, which, if it were possible (as it is not) to reach heaven, would come to nothing by the confusion of the workmen: for every man is building a several way, impotently conceited of his own model and his own materials. Reason is always striving, and always at a loss; and of necessity it must so come to pass, while it is exercised about that which is not its proper object*.”

What Dryden has here asserted is authorized by the admissions of the very persons to whom he has alluded, and whose superior knowledge had appeared to cast suspicion on his theory. Those great and highly-gifted teachers of the heathen world, who best perceived the falsehood of their national superstitions, and, amid the surrounding pesti-

* Preface to the *Religio Laici*.

lence of idolatry, were preserved from the general contagion by the apprehension of a purer Deity, never arrogated to themselves any merit of discovery. They confessed that they had derived their knowledge from tradition. “There is a tradition,” says Plato, “that one God once governed all the universe*.”—“There is a tradition,” says Aristotle, “received from of old among all men, that God is the creator and preserver of all things; and that God, being one, received a variety of names according to the variety of effects of which he is the cause†.”—And what was this universal tradition from which the idea of the unity of the Godhead was derived but the faint relics of revelation?—what was it but the lingering traces of the Almighty’s earliest dispensations, remaining with the descend-

* PLATO *Polit.* Quoted by Mitford in the religion of the Greeks.

† ARISTOTLE *de Mundo*, 6 & 7. Quoted by Mitford.

ants of Noah?—The tints of that rainbow-light which sealed God's covenant with the Patriarch was still dimly reflected upon the clouds of their national idolatry; and some exalted minds caught a glimpse of the departing beam, and followed it as the cynosure of their inquiries.

OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

But the persuasion of the existence of the Deity, however sublime the qualities which we may attribute to his nature, is perfectly unimportant for every religious purpose, unless we are at the same time persuaded, that he looks down with an eye of constant observation on his creatures, and is interested in the actions, and regulates the occurrences of their lives. Deism is as injurious in its influences as atheism itself, unless it be connected with an entire dependance on the superintending providence of its God.—The Gospel assures us that this intimate

connexion really does subsist between the Creator and his works ; that “ the very hairs of our head are numbered * ; ” that “ not a sparrow falls to the ground ” without the knowledge and the permission of the Almighty :—and, enlightened, as we are, by the instructions of revelation, with the knowledge of those probationary conditions attached to our residence on earth, we can perceive in the vicissitudes of our pilgrimage the directing counsels of his wisdom ; and we can trace in the interchange of joy and grief, of happiness and calamity, the immediate interposition of our heavenly Father awarding to his children the liberalities of parental love, or the chastisements of parental authority, with a view to the purification of the soul, and the interests of their eternal destination. But, if mankind had been left to discover for

* St. Matthew, ch. x. verses 29, 30.

themselves the knowledge of this important truth, it is scarcely possible that they should arrive at so cheering and salutary a conclusion. That the Deity—if indeed they should determine that there is a Deity—that the Deity is wise and powerful may, perhaps, be read in the exquisite variety, and the admirable proportions of the universe ; but whether he continues to extend over the operations of his hand the protection of his providence, or has dismissed the world, to roll its inhabitants along through the regions of illimitable space, without any farther concern for their prosperity or their affliction, is a problem of the most uncertain and difficult solution. “Allowing,” says Hume, “that God is the Author of the universe, it follows that he possesses that precise degree of power, intelligence and benevolence, which appears in its workmanship : but nothing farther can ever be

proved, except we call in the assistance of exaggeration and flattery to supply the defects of argument and reasoning. So far as the traces of any attributes appear, so far we may conclude that these attributes exist*.” Such is the rule prescribed by the great master of modern unbelief to guide the investigations of those who would meditate the nature of the Almighty. The rule is of itself most excellent and judicious. It is consistent with the soundest principles of philosophy. The reason would not be justified in adopting any other method of decision; and, if it be applied to the examination of the existence or the non-existence of Divine Providence, it will lead us to reject the supposition of any particular interference with the occurrences of the earth.—In contemplating the works of the Creator, we discover, that he has

* *Essay on Providence and a Future State.*

established certain general and necessary laws, which, though liable to partial deviations, are sufficiently fixed and permanent to ensure the regularity of the universe ;—we find that man is animated with peculiar inclinations, of which the temperate gratification is productive of corporeal strength and mental complacency, while the immoderate indulgence is punished by the after-penalties of intellectual and bodily disease ;—we find that his understanding is endowed with admirable faculties, and that the continued and strenuous exertion of its powers is most frequently successful in procuring an equivalent proportion of those advantages to which its labours are designed ;—we find that prudence is generally successful, imprudence generally unfortunate ; that virtue is generally rewarded, vice generally defeated ; that “ the race is generally to the swift, and the battle gene-

rally to the strong ;” and, if this process be occasionally interrupted, the reason would only receive from the triumphs of the unworthy, or the reverses of the deserving, the confirmation of that simple truth, which is declared by the ungenial spring or by the blighted harvest, that the laws of nature are admirable in their extensive effects, but are susceptible of partial variations, and may be thwarted by contravening accidents.—To the eye of unenlightened man every one of these exceptions affords an argument and an example against the agency and the direction of Divine Providence. The present and particular interposition of the Deity with the transactions of the earth is not only discredited by the apparent blemishes, but by the very arrangement and regularity and beauty of the creation. As the philosopher meditates the scenes and circumstances around him ; as he

compares the general order with the occasional defects ; from the order he discovers, that the Author of the universe has appointed from the beginning a system of wise and salutary laws for its direction ; and from the defects he learns, that the mighty Sovereign by whom they were imposed does not condescend to disturb the serenity of his power, by inspecting their operations, or counteracting the evil contingencies, that may arise from their collision*.

OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

But, having annihilated all prospect of

* Such is the conclusion of Hume, in the Essay I have lately quoted ; and also of Lord Bolingbroke, who says, that “ God has given his human creatures the materials of physical and moral happiness in the physical and moral constitution of things. • He has given them faculties and powers, necessary to collect and apply these materials. This the Creator has done for us. What we shall do for ourselves he has left to the freedom of our elections. This is the plan of divine wisdom : and we know nothing more particular, and indeed nothing more at all of the dispensations of Providence than this.”—LORD BOLINGBROKE'S *Works*, vol. v. p. 473, 474, quoted by Leland.

divine protection during our residence on earth, the reason may, perhaps, have the ability of consoling us for the calamities of life, by disclosing the hopes of an immortality. It may, perhaps, be able to reveal to us a hereafter, in which every evil shall be repaired, and a glorious atonement be provided for every inequality in our earthly destiny.—Alas !—if we have no other grounds of confidence in the existence of a future state than those which may be afforded by the arguments of man, most faint and wavering and uncertain must be our expectation of its event.—What are the testimonies to which the mere human teacher would refer us for the proofs of the immortality of the soul ?—Cicero has asserted, that the opinion is universally maintained among the different nations of the world ; and that the unanimous consent ought to be respected as an inward intimation from the

voice of nature*.—But to this it may be objected, that though the belief is common, it is by no means universal; that the slightest exception from the universality of its influence desecrates all its pretensions to oracular sanctity, and represents its unsupported adoption, rather as a weakness of superstition than an impulse of inspiration;—and that, even if the argument were valid, as it failed to impress conviction on the mind of the instructor, it cannot be expected to address itself with any very persuasive emphasis to the understandings of his disciples.—When, in his change of character, Cicero forgot the conclusions of the philosopher in

* “Omni autem in re consensus omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est. Quis est igitur qui suorum mortem primum non eo lugeat, quod eos orbatos vitæ commodis arbitretur? Tolle hanc opinionem: luctum sustuleris. Nemo enim mœret suo incommodo. Dolent fortasse, et anguntur: sed illa lugubris lamentatio fletusque mœrens ex eo est, quod eum quem dileximus vitæ commodis privatum arbitramur, idque sentire. Atque hoc ita sentimus natura duce, nulla ratione nullaque doctrina.”—CICERO, *Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 13.

the enthusiasm of the advocate* ;—when he was heard declaiming against the faith in the future existence of the soul, with all the force of his overwhelming ridicule, amid the applauses of the Roman people, who does not perceive, that it would have been a most insufficient answer to have recalled his own arguments to his recollection ; a most ineffectual means of silencing his opposition to remind the enlightened orator of an enlightened nation, that the opinion he despised was prevalent in the woods of Germany, and traditional in the hymns of the Druids ?

We are sometimes told to find, in the longing after immortality, and in the soul's shrinking back upon itself and starting at destruction, the suggestions of a divinity within the breast, and the intimations of eternity† ; but may we

* CICERO *pro Cluentio*, cap. 6.

† I need not say that the allusion here is to the magnificent verses of Addison, at the opening of the 5th act of *Cato*.

not be permitted to doubt the truth and the correctness of the interpretation, which is here attributed to the emotions of the heart?—May we not conceive that the pride of man has prejudiced his judgment?—May we not suspect that he has imagined the movements of an eternal spirit in that universal attachment to existence which the wisdom of the Almighty has implanted in his creatures to prevent their abandoning the state to which his providence has appointed them?—May we not presume that this boasted indication of a deathless nature is nothing more than the movement of a principle which is common to all animated things, and which in man has become educated and refined, till, dreading a total separation from the scenes which a long familiarity has rendered dear, he is solicitous that some memorial of his being should survive among them, and

longs to commit the recollection of his wisdom or his virtue or his valour to the earth, as he would leave the pledge of his attachment with a friend at parting?

Others would call upon us to receive the testimonies of our immortality in the return of the morning, in the reviving fertility of the spring, in the awakening from sleep, in the changes of the summer insect; but what conviction can be discovered in such faint analogies?—The reasonings which are raised upon such frail foundations inform us of no truth, but that man has trembled to encounter the cold obstructions of the grave, that, in his eagerness to be persuaded of the eternity of his nature, he has caught at every circumstance which might yield support to his visionary hopes, and mistaken the metaphors that might illustrate, for evidences that might confirm them.

Again we are directed to trace the indications of a deathless spirit, in the energy and the perfection of the mental faculties.—But when we are told that nothing superior to the memory and the invention can be imagined, even in the nature of the Divinity himself* ; that, in comprehending by their means the design and the system of the creation, we participate in the attributes of its author ; and that these faculties must necessarily be eternal as a part and an emanation of the eternal God†, though a hope may be

* “*Quid est enim memoria rerum et verborum? quid porro inventio? profecto id, quo nec in Deo quicquam majus, intelligi potest.*”—*Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 26.

† “*Quorum astrorum conversiones omnesque motus qui animo vidit, is docuit similem animum suum ejus esse, qui ea fabricatus esset in cœlo. Nam cum Archimedes lunæ, solis, quinque errantium motus in sphæram illigavit, effecit idem quod ille, qui Timæo mundum ædificavit, Platonis Deus ; ut tarditate et celeritate dissimillimos motus una regeret conversio. Quod si in hoc mundo fieri sine Deo non potest, ne in sphærâ quidem eosdem motus Archimedes sine divino ingenio potuisset imitari.*”—*Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 25.

“*Quidquid est illud, quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vivit, quod viget, cœleste et divinum, ob eamque rem æternum sit necesse est.*”—*Tus. Dis.*, lib. i. c. 27.

excited by the suggestion, that hope is mingled with emotions of the most anxious and painful incredulity ;—for, if the memory and the invention be thus eternal as they are excellent, why do they partake of the infirmities of the body ?—why fail they with the failure of the corporeal strength ?—why do they decay with the energies of the animal and inferior nature ?—why do they not increase in vivacity and quickness and apprehension as they return nearer and nearer to their source ?—why do they not spring forth, as they approximate the grave, with an ardent and exulting eagerness to rejoin the fountain of their inspiration ?

Surely these things very powerfully advocate the cause of those who would represent the principle of life as solely originating in and depending on the organization of the body.—If the faculties of

the soul be thus intimately connected with the health and the vigour of the form it animates ; if the tenderest attachments and the most rooted enmities, the attainments of the understanding and the affections of the heart, may for ever be erased by the ravages of the malady that paralyzes the bodily members ; if “ the ideas, like the children of our youth, often die before us, and our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching, where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away* ;” do not these phenomena announce to us, with all the force of corroborating facts, and to which we have nothing to oppose but vague and indefinite aspirations, that the soul and the body are inseparable and the same—that the theory of the materialist, however

* LOCKE *on the Understanding*, book ii. ch. 14.

repulsive it may be to our hopes and to our pride, is most consistent with actual experience—that life proceeds from the apt conformation and connexion of the members—as the light from the taper, and the music from the lyre—and that they originate and flourish and decay together? This is the conclusion that thousands have adopted from the contemplation of the circumstances and conditions of our nature; and, if their sentiments be correct, there is one dreary consequence which must inevitably succeed. If the lessons of the Materialist be true, existence ceases with the beating of the pulse; and is for ever stopt with the current of the blood.—Reasoning on human principles, it is impossible to disunite the theory, by which life is considered as the result of organization, from the corollary, that life is therefore as perishable as the organs of which it is the result.—As far

as the intelligence of man can discover the connexion that subsists between the cause and the effect, these things appear to be inseparable ; but we are no sooner informed, by revelation, of the immortality of the soul, than the opinions of the materialist become divorced from those malignant consequences, which might, under other circumstances, be anticipated from their adoption. To the christian such speculations are perhaps unprofitable ; but they are innocent speculations. He knows, on the authority of his faith, that the Almighty will recompense his obedience with the eternal felicity of heaven ; that his body is the temple of the living God ; and whether the principle of his mere animal existence be material or immaterial, is perfectly indifferent to him ; for the important fact of his immortality is not a question of corporeal organi-

zation but of divine benevolence and power*.

It has occasionally been my lot to fall in contact with individuals, who have professed deistical opinions, and, though such persons are generally found to be rather

* Materialism is peculiarly current in the modern schools of medicine and anatomy. There is no assignable reason why anatomists by profession should be more capable of forming a decision on this intricate and mysterious question than others who are less conversant with their science; but, as they appear to have arrogated to themselves a right to arbitrate on this occasion, and to infer, from their superior knowledge of the organs of the body, that they must necessarily possess a deeper insight into the properties of the mind, it may be right to intimate, that they are by no means unanimous in their opinions; and that the most distinguished have refused the sanction of their names to the system by which the body and the soul are thus confounded.—A few weeks before his death, Boerhaave said to his friend the Rev. Mr. Schultens, that, “he had never doubted of the spiritual and immaterial nature of the soul; but declared that he had lately a kind of experimental certainty of the distinction between corporeal and thinking substances, which mere reason and philosophy cannot afford, and opportunities of contemplating the wonderful and inexplicable union of soul and body, which nothing but long sickness can give. This he illustrated by a description of the effects which the infirmities of his body had upon his faculties, which yet they did not so oppress or vanquish, but his soul was always master of itself, and always resigned to the pleasure of its Maker.”
JOHNSON'S Life of Boerhaave.

ostentatious in the communication of their sentiments, I never remember—even in a single instance—to have encountered among them any firm or confident reliance on the future existence of the soul. Many regard such a state as possible, and even as highly probable,—for there is a contagious influence in opinion, and every man involuntarily imbibes something of the expectations and the persuasions of his companions,—but I never heard of any one of them who professed himself to be satisfied of his future destination. The unbeliever, residing in the hourly habits of familiarity with christians, and in the constant observation of their religious hope, receives an authority in their assurance of an hereafter, which seems to accredit the probability of its occurrence, and induces him to suspect the arguments that oppose it. He doubts, but he does not deny, the immortality of his nature ;

he entertains a tenderness for the belief of his childhood ; he hesitates in the admission of the reasonings, by which it is impugned ; he indirectly derives a hope from the prevalence of the Gospel, that moderates the miserable suggestions of his deism. The modern infidel receives involuntarily a kind of cheering confidence from the faith of others, which were unattainable by any inquiry of the unassisted intellect : but that the respect, the reverence, the half-persuasion of the truth of this christian doctrine, which is manifested by many separatists from christianity, is an unacknowledged operation of the faith, is demonstrated by the undeviating experience of antiquity, and by the unanimous consent of those who had most diligently speculated on this momentous subject previously to the incarnation of the Messiah. Socrates is represented as confessing, that the mortality

of the soul was the generally received opinion of the people * ; “ A future state was not believed,” says Bolingbroke, “ by the philosophers, not even by Plato and Pythagoras, though they talked of it †. The belief was ridiculed by Cicero in the public forum ‡, and scorned by Cæsar in the open senate §. Even those in whom the will—that eloquent and persuasive advocate in the direction of the judgment—was prepossessed in favour of the opinion, acknowledged, that the arguments on which it was grounded were insufficient to authorize any reliance on its truth. “ The opinions of some,” said Cicero to his friend Atticus, “ convey a hope, that the soul may exist independent of the body, and ascend to heaven as to its home:—if perchance this sentiment

* *Phædo*.

† BOLINGBROKE'S *works*, vol. v. p. 513.

‡ *Pro Cluentio*: cap. 61.

§ *Sallust de Bello Catilin.*

should delight you*.”—There are few things more melancholy than the reply. It indicates the incapacity of the unaided reason. It proclaims the solicitude of the healthy and unperverted heart, under the oppression of that burthen of religious uncertainty by which we are afflicted, when abandoned to our natural sources of information, and bereaved of those divine communications of which it is impiety to suspect the truth. Atticus would have been content with error:—he would have blessed the falsehood that deceived him into hope:—whether the soul were instinct with immortality or destined to annihilation, he would have been satisfied, could he but have cheered the period of his consciousness on earth by the persuasion—even by the vain persuasion—of its being animated with an everlasting prin-

* 1. *Tus. Dis. xi.* Reliquorum sententiæ spem afferunt, si te hoc forte delectat, posse animos cum è corporibus excesserint, in cœlum quasi in domicilium suum pervenire.

ciple. “ Me vero delectat : idque primùm ita esse velim ; deinde etiamsi non sit mihi persuaderi tamen velim*.” And yet, with this ardent and ingenuous desire of conviction, what benefit did he derive from the study of the volumes in which it was attempted to establish the belief? Of Plato—the revered, the enlightened, the immortal Plato—with whom Cicero considered it more honourable to err than to be right with others—he declares, that he had often dwelt upon his pages and followed him in his splendid speculations ; but that all his studies had been attended with the most unprofitable results. As long as the volume was in his hand, he assented to the conclusions of the teacher ; but when the fascination of his eloquence was withdrawn, and he meditated on the immortality of the soul, in the solitude of his chamber, all his previous assent was

* *Tus. Dis.* xi.

dissipated.—“Lexi me herculé et quidem sæpius, sed nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior, cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate cœpi cogitare, assentio illa omnis elabitur.” And if the arguments which the human reason could supply were found insufficient to impress any permanent conviction upon the mind of one, who was earnestly solicitous of being convinced, and to whom the prospects of eternity might promise to recompense a life of virtue with an after-payment of imperishable joy ; what effect could they be expected to operate upon the understandings of those, whose impurity of life had demoralized the affections, and deadened every holier impulse, and debased every nobler aspiration, of the soul ? What interest would induce the worldly and the base to inquire into the reality of a state of being, which threatened to deprive their disembodied spirits of

all those sensual gratifications, which they esteemed as the privileges and the prerogatives of existence? What powerful prepossessions would deter them from the admission, of an opinion, that instructed them to tremble at the anticipation of a destiny, in which the bitterness of privation might *possibly* be enhanced by the exaction of the penalties of crime?

OF A FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

When I mention the future punishment of the guilty as only a possible consequence of the immortality of the soul, it must be remarked, that the present sentiments of mankind appear to have connected two events, that are by no means necessarily united, and have accustomed us to employ the terms, “a future judgment” and a “future state,” as the synonymous indications of inseparable circumstances. They are so to the disciple of the Messiah; but the moment we withdraw our

faith from the instructions which his revelation has so mercifully communicated, the whole system of religious opinions becomes scattered and disunited ; and, after we have discovered, that there may or may not be a divinity, that there may or may not be a superintending providence, that there may or may not be a life beyond the grave ; it is still demanded of us to establish, by the authority of our reason, that that not impossible, but doubtful, state of being is accompanied with any recompense for the virtuous, or any inflictions for the guilty. The few, the very few, of those who in the heathen world admitted the belief in the immortality of our nature, had entirely divested the opinion of all its salutary apprehensions *. The only argument which could

* “ Fortasse etiam inexorabiles judices Minos et Rhadamanthus ; apud quos nec te L. Crassus defendet, nec M. Antonius : nec, quoniam apud Græcos judices res agetur, poteris adhibere Demosthenem : tibi ipsi pro te erit maxima corona

be adduced to authorize such a persuasion must be derived from the attributes of the Creator;—if the Almighty is more holy and more just than he is exhibited in the ordinary operations of nature, there may, indeed, be some grounds for entertaining such awful and important views of our eternal destination. But this indeed would be difficult to establish.—I revert to the unobjectionable maxim of Hume: “Allowing that God is the author of the universe, it follows that he possesses that precise degree of power, intelligence and benevolence, which appears in its workmanship; but nothing farther

causa dicenda. Hæc fortasse metuis, et idcirco mortem censes esse sempiternum malum.

“A. Adeone me delirare censes, ut ista esse credam?”

Tus. Dis. l. 1. c. 5, 6.

“The truth is,” says Plato, in the first Book de Legibus, “to determine or establish any thing certain about these matters, in the midst of so many doubts and disputations, is the work of God only.” “In this life,” says Socrates, in the Phædon of Plato, “it is either absolutely impossible or extremely difficult, to arrive at a clear knowledge of this matter.”

can be proved." All then that the reason can perform, is, to collect the attributes of their author from the consideration of the scenes and circumstances around us ; and, unless the various volume of creation be perused by the light and interpretation of the Gospel, we should only find, from the sufferings of the innocent, that the Deity does not delight in virtue, and from the triumph of the wicked, that sin may be committed with impunity.—That indiscriminate distribution of the benefits of life, from which the christian derives his evidence in favour of a future judgment, to the mind of one, whose inquiries were only directed by the principles of human investigation, instead of pleading as testimonies in favour of a retribution after death, would only be advanced as arguments to impugn the righteousness of God. " There is one event to the evil

and the good*," says Solomon; and the disciple of the Gospel, assisted in his meditations on the events of time by the illuminations of the sacred volume, perceives that we are here living in a state of trial, that this apparent neglect of the Divinity is perfectly reconcileable with his mercy and his wisdom; and that a day shall arrive, in which his justice will be manifested by his "discerning between the righteous and the wicked." "There is one event to the evil and the good," the wise and the scribes and the disputers of this world would exclaim; and they would add, "the Creator is therefore regardless of our actions; it were idle to presume, that he would delay the inflictions of his wrath; we are informed by the daily experience of our lives, that he does not "discern;" and

* Ecclesiastes, chap. ix, v. 2.

we may therefore legitimately conclude, that he never will “discern between the righteous and the wicked.”

Such is the course of argument, that is most generally maintained by those who separate themselves from the direction of the Gospel;—but it is useless to speak further on this head:—before the reason can be required to occupy itself upon a subject of such mysterious and intricate speculation as the probability of a future retribution, which may punish the vicious and reward the virtuous, it is first necessary that we should inform ourselves of the real nature of virtue and of vice.

OF A MORAL RULE OF ACTION.

On this most important subject, it is necessary that mankind should be enlightened by some superior instruction. Each individual cannot traffic on his pri-

vate stock of reason. For the stock of each man is small, and he must refer himself to some foreign source of information ; but the moment he quits the pale of Christianity, the duties of morality become for him as uncertain and problematical as the articles of religious faith. “ How miserable,” exclaims Beccaria, “ is the condition of the human mind! to which the most distant and least essential matters, the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, are more distinctly known than the most interesting truths of morality, which are always fluctuating as they happen to be driven by the gales of passion, or received or transmitted by ignorance *.” “ I have no intention,” says Hume, “ to exalt the Moderns at the expense of the Ancients. I only mean to represent the uncertainty of all those judgments concerning charac-

* BECCARIA *on Honour*.

ter ; and to convince you that fashion, vogue, custom, and law, are the chief foundations of all moral determinations. The Athenians were a civilized, intelligent people, if ever there were one ; and yet their man of merit might, in this age, be held in horror and execration. The French are also, without doubt, a very civilized intelligent people, and yet their man of merit might, with the Athenians, be an object of the highest contempt and ridicule, and even hatred*.” If we desire to be informed of our duty, we can only inquire of the philosophers, whom Rousseau has justly and sarcastically described as being only right upon the single point, in which they all agree, their contempt and ridicule of each other†. Hume acknow-

* HUME’S *Dialogue*.

† “ Si vous pesez leurs raisons, ils n’en ont que pour détruire ; si vous comptez les voix chacun se réduit à la sienne : ils ne s’accordent que pour disputer.” — *Emile*, tom. iii. p. 27.

ledges that the bounds of virtue and vice cannot be determined* ; and there is scarcely a single virtue that has not been encountered by a systematic opponent ; or a single vice that has not been exalted by the recommendations of its advocate.

I shall not refer to the darker ages of antiquity for my examples, but to the illuminati of the modern schools of infidelity. Condorcet justifies the gross licentiousness of Voltaire's infamous poem, ridicules the condemning it as affected and austere, and reproaches the excessive value which is attached to purity of manners †. Diderot rejects all moral distinctions of conduct, and declares that if a constant silence had been maintained upon the subject, the ideas of virtue and of vice would have been unknown to us ‡; and sanctions the

* *Essay on Refinement.*

† In the *Life of Voltaire* he speaks against “ l'affectation de l'austérité dans les mœurs,” and “ le prix excessif qu'on attache à leur pureté.”

‡ “ Il me semble, que si jusqu'à ce jour, on eût gardé le

wildness of the passions, by exalting them as the indications of intellectual superiority*. Frederick the Great wrote an essay in praise of thieving, a crime which an anonymous author has not only defended, but theoretically illustrated and explained†. Voltaire had his eulogies for the Empress Catherine, after she had murdered her husband and usurped his empire ‡. Hume has given the most exten-

silence sur les mœurs nous en serions encore à savoir ce que c'est que la vertu, ce que c'est que la vice."—*Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, tom. ii. p. 84.

* "Les passions sobres font des hommes communs."—*Pensées Philosophiques*.

† The books here alluded to I never met with; they were supposed to have been written by Brissot, and were entitled, *La Théorie du Vol*, and *L'Apologie du Vol*. They are mentioned by Mennais, vol. i. p. 375.

‡ I transcribe on this subject a passage from one of Horace Walpole's Letters to Madame du Deffand; "Voltaire me fait horreur avec sa Catherine; le beau sujet de badinage que l'assassinat d'un mari, et l'usurpateur de son trône!" "Il n'est pas mal," dit-il, "qu'on ait une faute à réparer:" "Eh! comment répare-t-on un meurtre? Est-ce en retenant des poètes à ses gages? En payant des historiens mercenaires, et en soudoyant des philosophes ridicules à mille lieues de son pays? Ce sont ces âmes viles qui chantent un Auguste, et se taisent sur ses proscriptions."—*Letters*, vol. i. pages 148 and 149.

sive license to debauchery, by condemning celibacy, self-denial, and humility *, and by asserting that no indulgence, however sensual, can in itself be criminal †. He has declared that adultery must be practised, if we would possess ourselves of all the advantages of life ; and in his comparative estimate of crime, has considered it as more venial than drunkenness ‡ ;—but however, according to his principles, it is not possible that any distinction should be made between the actions of the best and the worst of men, for “ *if there be any such thing as sin,*” he boldly pronounces God to be the author of it §. Freret instructs us, that all ideas of justice and injustice, of virtue and vice, of glory and infamy, are purely arbitrary, and dependant on cus-

* *Principles of Morals*, 9th section.

† *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, 9th sect.—“ Let us consider what we call vicious luxury. No gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious.”

‡ *Essay on Refinement in the Arts*.

§ See the conclusion of the essay on *Liberty and Necessity*.

tom *. Helvetius assures us, that it little imports whether men are vicious, if they are but enlightened †. A community of wives, incest, and unnatural crimes, have each successively and collectively been recommended to the adoption of mankind ; and that no vice, to which the violence of passion might hurry the infuriated, might be in want of its palliation and excuse, even the preying upon human flesh was seriously defended by Brissot, at the time that the Deity was desecrated in the capital of France, and the representative of human reason, in the worthy emblem of a naked prostitute, was impiously exalted upon his altars.—There is no species of enormity which has not, in some period, and among some nations, been respected as honourable ; there is

* *Letter of Thrasybulus.*

† HELVETIUS *on Man*, vol. i. p. 27. These two last citations are from the notes of Mr. Rennell's admirable pamphlet on Scepticism.

no species of abomination, which the human race may not gradually be induced to tolerate, to practise, and to applaud, when abandoned to the guidance of their own deteriorated intellect, to the impulses of passion, and to the counsels of what is now considered an unprejudiced and liberal philosophy.

All those more mysterious and spiritual instructions of the Gospel, which are so fruitful of consolation and support, are necessarily beyond the reach of human reason. Even those two first and most simple questions of religion, which are connected with the existence of a God and a state of future retribution, and which are absolutely essential to the happiness of mankind, are undiscoverable by our unassisted efforts. They are points on which revelation only can enlighten us; but by revelation we disdain to be enlightened. We are too proud to submit

the understanding to the direction of a teacher, who challenges our implicit obedience and consent by the right of his divine infallibility. We will not bear that the mind should continue in a state of pupillage ; and we fly from assurance to speculation, that we may gratify our pride by the sense of intellectual independence. Impatient of the superiority of the Gospel, we leave certainty for doubt, and truth for error. We address ourselves to the reason, which, says Bayle, “ is a principle of destruction, and not of edification ; which is only capable of creating difficulties, and of eternizing disputes * ”—and, after infinite labour of meditation, we arrive at the desperate conclusion, that the being of a God is doubtful ; that his attributes are uncertain ;

* “ La raison humaine est un principe de destruction et non pas d'édification ; elle n'est propre qu'à former des doutes et à se tourner à droite et à gauche pour éterniser une dispute.”—*Dict. Crit. Art. Manichéens*, Note D.

that the existence of a superintending Providence is inconsistent with our experience ; that the immortality of the soul is supported by slight testimonies and insufficient arguments ; that a state of future retribution is still more problematical and vague ; that the nature of virtue and of vice is as arbitrary as the caprices of the taste ; and that the sum of all religious knowledge is comprised in the apprehension of this solitary truth :
“ MAN IS BORN AND SHALL DIE.”



PART III.

IN THE ABSENCE OF CHRISTIAN OPINIONS THE
REASON COULD SUGGEST NO SUBSTITUTES TO
SUPPLY THEIR LOSS.

THE WANT OF CHRISTIAN OPINIONS IS
IRREMEDIAL.

WE have seen in the first, and the larger, division of these volumes, that those articles of religious faith and duty, which are inculcated by the Gospel revelation, are essential to the happiness of mankind. We have subsequently shewn that unless the Almighty had been mercifully pleased to communicate to his creatures the knowledge of these important truths, they could not have been established by the unassisted efforts of our reason. If, therefore, the enemies of Christianity should ever prove successful in their endeavours for the extirpation of our faith, we must be content to be bereaved of all these animating

prospects of immortality, from which the mind derives its only efficient arguments of consolation, for the decay of the faculties of life, for the oppression of adversity, for the disappointment of authorized expectations, for the ingratitude, the inconstancy or the malevolence of our fellow-creatures, and for the death of those we love.—Under these inevitable contingencies of human existence, the absence of the lessons of revelation would be irreparable. Nothing of human imagination could recompense the afflicted for the privation of their religious hope, or supply to them that devout and cheering confidence of supplication, with which the Gospel encourages them to address their sorrows to the compassion of their Saviour and their God.—Here it is manifest, that the loss of Christianity would be irremediable. — But, perhaps, the invention may not be found

equally defective in its attempts to provide for the peace and security of society. It may not have the ability of counselling the affections, and inspiring tranquillity to the secret soul, and the inward emotions of the breast ; but it may be able to produce a superficial calm, and allay every external symptom of irritation ; it may be capable, perhaps, of devising a succedaneum, which, in the failure of more venerable restraints, may preclude the passions from exhibiting their violence, intervene as a moderator in the struggles of opposing interests, and defend the social column from being overthrown and trampled under foot in the tumultuous competitions of selfishness.

There are three several expedients to which our attention has been directed by the enemies of religion, as sufficient of themselves to preserve mankind in the

practice of the reciprocal obligations of morality. It has been conceived that the restraints and sanctions of Christianity might be supplied by the apprehension of the LAWS, or by the perception of SELF-INTEREST, or by the silent influence of OPINION. That these are very potent agents in promoting the harmony of society, it is impossible to controvert: and it also seems equally impossible to deny, that they are indebted for much, if not the whole, of their energy and virtue to the prevalent ascendancy of the Gospel, which has inspired a milder spirit into the enactments of the legislator; which has instructed every individual to contemplate his everlasting interests in his exertions for the interests of others, and which has given to popular opinion its direction and its justice, its weight and its stability.— If these views should be suspected of par-

tiality, it must, at all events, be allowed, that these vaunted substitutes for religion exist at the present moment, with whatever force and potency they respectively possess ; that we are actually making an experiment of their efficacy ; that their influence, if not augmented, is certainly not impaired by the presence of Christianity, and could not be increased by its abolition ; that as they have not succeeded in securing the happiness of mankind, aided as they now are by their union with religion, it would be idle to expect any more favourable result from the operation of their single and diminished powers ; that nothing, therefore, could be gained by eradicating from the public mind the convictions of the faith, and that much might probably be forfeited with the loss of them. —Immeasurable, indeed, that loss would be ; and its magnitude would be very inadequately estimated by any statement of

the imperfections which are inseparable from those variable inducements to duty, and those weak restraints from crime, to which we should be reduced by the extirpation of the Gospel.

In the course of our previous reflections so much has already been anticipated on the futility of those mere human motives to duty which exist independently of religion, that nothing more remains for me to perform, than to exhibit in one brief and connected view an abstract of their vices and their imperfections.

OF LAWS.

It is with the powerful that the establishment of an equal code of laws must necessarily originate, and on them its preservation and stability must depend. But without some religious argument to persuade them to so great and magnanimous an effort, it is difficult to conceive any

inducement by which they could be actuated to mitigate the claims of power, and concede to their dependants that participation of their privileges, which is connected with impartial laws and an equal distribution of justice. In the natural course of things those effects are to be anticipated which were universal in the times antecedent to the Christian revelation, when “all checks were on the inferior to restrain him to the duty of submission, and none on the superior to engage him to the reciprocal duties of gentleness and humanity*.”

But supposing that some unimaginable motive should compel the powerful to silence the suggestions of selfishness, and attempt a scheme of enlarged and equitable legislation, how many difficulties would arise to deter him from an undertaking, which appears to baffle the ingenuity

* HUME'S *Essay on the Populousness of the Ancient Nations*.

of man. So many remote and collateral effects are to be considered and provided for, that the reason seems incapable of foreseeing all the possible consequences, and finding a security against the evil operations, of its enactments. Ordinances that flatter our expectations with promises of the most favourable results, have frequently been proved on trial to maintain a direction diametrically opposite to the good thus designed*. Laws framed for the support of virtue have often conducted to the encouragement of vice†. It is only by experience that the beneficial or malignant tendency of any particular act of

* As in the instance of our own Poor Laws.

† “ No great or flourishing state could ever punish fornication in such a manner as its ill influence on society was confessed to deserve ; because it was always found that a severe restraint on this opened the way to worser crimes.”—WARBURTON’S *Divine Legation*, book i. sect. 2.—There are offences in which the very publicity afforded by the detection, the trial, and the punishment, conduces to increase the frequency of their repetition : and into which men are more seduced by the example, than they are deterred by the punishment, of the culprits.

the legislator can with certainty be discerned. And, should the result be evil, the success of the proposed amendment will be retarded by those innumerable obstacles which are opposed to every design for ameliorating the actual condition of mankind by the slowness, the prepossessions, the selfishness, and the indolence of those on whom its adoption rests ; and, when eventually ratified and confirmed, it may still, in some unexpected manner, be found equally injurious or destructive in its consequences.

Having decided upon the actions which may be rendered subject to the authority of the magistrate, without engendering a greater injury than that which it is attempted to repair, another difficulty arises in apportioning the degrees of punishment, with which each particular transgression shall be visited. This is a matter that demands the utmost delicacy and

discrimination. An error here, either on the side of rigour or of lenity, silently operates as a repeal of the ordinance itself. The apprehension of a light and trivial penalty, will not deter the guilty from perpetrating an offence to which his inclinations strongly tempt him; and the imposition of an excessive retribution, will work on the compassion of the injured, and dissuade him from the prosecution of the offender.

The law is limited in its sphere of action. Many crimes which are most inimical to the general happiness of man, are placed beyond the reach of its correction. Ingratitude to benefactors, austerities to dependants, unkindness to children, disrespect to parents, violation of confidence, perfidious counsels, calumnious insinuations, the too rigid exaction of our rights, the flattering of superiors, the pursuit of responsible situations by

one who is conscious of his ignorance or incapacity, partiality or indolence in the depositaries of important trusts :—in fine, all transgressions against those obligations, which have been named by moralists *the imperfect duties*, from the very circumstance of their eluding the jurisdiction of every earthly tribunal, and which are most intimately connected with our social and domestic happiness, must be permitted to pass without penalty or reproach. They are too various, subtile and mutable in their nature to be capable of legal definition, and are too private to admit the scrutiny of the magistrate.

When the legislator has promulgated his ordinances, his unauthorized condemnation of an action can never inspire the breast with that secret dread and horror of committing it, which is excited by the religious apprehensions of violating the will of the Almighty. His denunciation

has no more authority over the conscience, than the unsupported and questionable opinion of any other individual. It cannot impress the mind of the offender with those enduring feelings of contrition, which might deter him from the repetition of his crime ; it cannot agitate his thoughts by day and his dreams by night ; it cannot fill the soul with those implacable agonies of remorse which have so often urged the penitent to seek a relief for the burthen of his heart, in the penance of a voluntary restitution.

The only impediment to offence would be the possibility of detection. Iniquity itself would be deprived of all its guilt and shame. The chances of discovery would be compared with the emoluments of success ; and sin would rather be regarded as a gaming hazard, than as a moral enormity. To young, inconsiderate, and adventurous spirits, the prohibition

would almost appeal as an inducement to transgression. It would address their love of enterprise with the probability of gain and the excitement of danger. Sin and shame would be disunited, vice and virtue would be synonymous with detection and escape. While animated, as all men are, with that confidence in their own good fortune, which is an universal instinct of human nature, peril would operate as a temptation to offence, and impunity as an encouragement to its repetition.

However wisely the laws may be constituted, there can be no reliance on the certainty and justice of their distribution ; the criminal will frequently be acquitted, from default of evidence ; the innocent will often be betrayed to pay the penalties of guilt, by fortuitous coincidences and by the unhappy combination of suspicious circumstances.

The determinations of the judgment-seat are capable of being corrupted by the favour or the venality of the magistrate ; and, in the absence of every religious control on his authority, where is the impediment which shall prevent him from regulating his decisions by the dictates of interest or of favour ?—What inducement shall persuade him to extend the unbought protection of his tribunal to the poor and to the weak ; to the victim of powerful oppression, or the martyr of popular malignity ?

The laws are themselves subservient to the control of public morals ; and as the execution of them is committed to the discretion of human agents, no ordinance will ever remain in force that is not correspondent with the prevailing disposition and the actual character of the people. The severity of our penal code—without any interference of the legislator—is mo-

derated in its exercise by the gentler spirit which Christianity has infused into the hearts of those, who assist in the distribution of its ordinances. As public virtue may thus effect the reformation of an evil in the national institutions, in the same manner, public vice may also desecrate and repeal the wisest and the most salutary institutions of the legislator. In Rome, “the corruption of manners destroyed the censorship, which was itself established to destroy the corruption of manners; for, when this corruption became general, the censor lost his power*.”

Such are the weaknesses and the defects that attend the efforts of all human legislators. “The operation of the wisest laws,” says Gibbon, “is imperfect and precarious. They seldom inspire virtue, they cannot always restrain vice. Their power is insufficient to prohibit all that

* MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*, liv. 23. c. 21.

they condemn, nor can they always punish the actions they prohibit:”—and “under these discouraging circumstances,” he continues, “a prudent magistrate, must observe with pleasure, the ascendancy of a religion, which diffuses among the people a pure, benevolent, and universal system of ethics, adapted to every duty and condition of life; recommended as the rule and reason of the supreme Deity, and enforced by the sanction of eternal rewards and punishments*.”

OF SELF-INTEREST.

Another expedient which has been considered capable of supplying the want of the christian motives to duty, has been discovered in the connexion which is imagined to subsist between the interests of society and of every particular member of the body. “The good of the

* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xx.

individual," says Montesquieu, "is always to be found in the good of the community*;" and D'Alembert has so far extended the proposition as to declare, that "the proper apprehension of our own interest, is the principle of all moral obligations†."—It is conceived that the just apprehension of this alliance between virtue and self-interest might be sufficient to maintain mankind in the practice of their moral duties.—If there really did exist this reciprocal and intimate relation between the public and the private good, the progress of the human race towards that state of perfectibility, of which it has been supposed

* "L'intérêt des particuliers se trouve toujours dans l'intérêt commun."—*L'Histoire des Troglodites.*

† "La solution de toutes ces questions, qui tiennent à la morale, aboutit toujours, par plus ou moins de branches, à un tronc commun, à notre intérêt bien entendu, principe de toutes les obligations."—D'ALEMBERT, *Eclaircissement sur les Elém. de Philos.*

susceptible, would be rapidly achieved; and the few impediments that oppose its march, would be cast aside with very little difficulty of exertion. It would only be necessary to inform the public mind upon a subject of which it has always manifested a particular avidity of instruction:—it would only be requisite to inform the multitude of the readiest and the easiest way of promoting their worldly advantage, and general happiness and virtue would be produced, as a collateral consequence, from the dissemination of the maxims of selfishness.—But, unfortunately, this connexion does not in reality subsist.—There is, on the contrary, a constant strife and opposition between the interests of the society and the individual; and, though it is certainly for the benefit of each particular person, that the actions of all others should be

confined within the bounds of the strictest equity, and regulated by a spirit of benevolence and forbearance ;— it is equally for his advantage, that he should be himself exempted from all such narrow and visionary limitations, and assume the outward demonstrations of a generous, liberal, and disinterested conduct, while he secretly preys upon the innocence and credulity of his companions.—The good of the public and the individual are so far from being united, that they are in a state of constant opposition. The very business and movement of existence, is maintained by the excitement of their competition.—The disunion that subsists between them, is manifest by the examples of the highest and the lowest orders of society.—The painful and imperious duty, which is demanded of the persons who are raised to situ-

ations of important trust, and who conscientiously meditate the discharge of them, is to sacrifice their private aggrandizement and attachments ; to postpone partiality to justice ; to relinquish the opportunity of conferring wealth on their family and their friends ; and to bestow on more deserving strangers those favours of patronage, which others, who are careless of the public, and only solicitous of their own advantage, divert into less meritorious channels, that the emolument may flow back upon themselves. That the inferior classes of society consider their interests as separate from the interest of their superiors, is evident from the consideration of this simple fact. Government, which is the natural defender of social order,—and which is destined by its peculiar functions, to provide for the prosperity and

the happiness of the community, is compelled to address itself to the aid of force to secure the execution of even its wisest and most salutary purposes.—It is the foe of many, while it acts in the name, and on the authority, of all.

It has been so continually repeated, that the interests of the monarch and the people are the same, that we have yielded our consent to the assertion as if it were an established and indisputable axiom of political philosophy.—But, unless Christianity interfere to cast the weight of its authority into the scale of their reciprocal duties, and instruct the parties to seek the accomplishment of their eternal hopes, by their sacrifices for the benefit of others, I am unable to perceive any traces of this amicable relation. It appears to me, on the contrary, that from every worldly view of their respective situations, they are placed in a state

of natural collision and hostility.—It is the interest of the monarch—and the more enlarged and enlightened his designs for the benefit of his empire, so much the more it is his interest—to possess himself of that arbitrary command over the wealth and services of his subjects, which will ensure facility to the execution of his purposes.—It is the interest of the people, that the actions of the monarch should be so limited and constrained by the ascendancy of the laws, as effectually to defend their personal property and freedom from the possibility of all tyrannous encroachment.—It is the interest of the monarch to invalidate the powers, it is the interest of the subject to strengthen the powers, of the constitution ; and these things are manifestly incompatible.

But if personal interest does not promise to afford any security for the per-

formance of our civil duties, it is still less likely to provide for the fulfilment of our private obligations.

If self-interest or expediency be admitted as the foundation of morals, it would necessarily be adopted as the only rational and legitimate motive of action ; and by the extended influence of such a principle, all distinction between vice and virtue would be levelled and confused. If self-interest be the rule of conduct, successful sin is wisdom ; unsuccessful sin is folly. The offender is convicted of a miscalculation ; but is obnoxious to no imputation of guilt. Whatever the deed may be, in the perpetration of it he seeks his immediate interest ; he acts in compliance with his principles ; and, if he fail of his object, he may claim pity for his disappointment, but he can deserve neither reproach or punishment from his

fellow competitors in the race of selfishness.

The authorizing personal expediency as an honourable motive of action would destroy all confidence between man and man.—There could be no mutual dependence on the honour of friends and colleagues ; no reliance on the fidelity of servants. As long as *honesty was the best policy*, it would be practised in obedience to the principle of utility ; and when it failed to be politic, would, with an equal indifference, be violated to preserve consistency with the same miserable and demoralizing ethics. Hume, one of the chief assertors of expediency as the foundation of morals, has recorded his admission of this truth. He has acknowledged that, “ according to the imperfect way in which human affairs are conducted, a sensible knave, in particular inci-

dents, may think that an act of iniquity or infidelity will make a considerable addition to his fortune, without causing any considerable breach in the social union and confederacy. That honesty is the best policy, may be a good general rule, but is liable to many exceptions : and he, it may, perhaps, be thought, conducts himself with most wisdom who observes the general rule and takes advantage of all the exceptions *.”

The evil results to be anticipated from the dissemination of such an ignoble institute of life and conduct, is not confined to pecuniary transactions. Every predominant passion or inclination instructs its slave to pursue his interest in the gratification of its claims. He must be cautious of overstepping the just limits of temperance or prudence ;—of inducing any injury to his fortune or his health ;—

* *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, Sec. ix.

of incurring any severe affliction as the after-consequence of his excesses. According to the selfish estimate of good and evil, he will regard his actions with censure or approbation in proportion to the injury which they threaten to himself, and not from their effects upon society. With Hume, he will consider adultery, which only strikes at the mental peace and the domestic happiness of his friend, as an act of inferior criminality to intoxication, which may originate a disease within himself*. All that the votary of selfishness is called upon to contemplate, in the access of passion, is the speediest, and the safest method of fruition.—If he be tempted by his lust, his principles would authorize the seduction of its object, and

* “If libertine love, or even infidelity to the marriage-bed, be more frequent in polite ages, when it is often regarded only as a piece of gallantry; drunkenness on the other hand is much less common. A vice more odious and pernicious both to mind and body.”—*Essay on Refinement in the Arts.*

direct the subsequent desertion of its victim.

Another malignant consequence which would ensue from the adoption of the selfish system of morals, would be the annihilation of all private friendships. Mistrust, jealousy, and doubt would be cast over every society. Affection would be checked and blighted by the suspicion, which either party would entertain, of some intended machination in the other. The intercourse of companions would be disturbed by the constant apprehensions of deceit. Each would dread lest the external appearances of cordiality were assumed for the concealment of some darker purpose; lest—as Frederick the Great behaved towards Voltaire,—the pretended friend should first exhaust the juice of the orange, and then dismiss himself of the rind*.

* La Metrie informed the king, that the courtiers were

Another inevitable result, would be the destruction of all gratitude for past kindness and consideration for former services. It is the interest of every individual to avail himself of all the advantages that can be extracted from the benevolence of his fellow-creatures, and never be seduced into any personal sacrifices, but by the expectation of some usurious return. The ability to assist would conciliate a temporary respect; but this respect would be diminished as the ability became impaired.—On the same principle, by which expediency is wisdom, consideration for the weak or the distressed is folly:—if selfishness be virtue, an unproductive gratitude is vice.

It is allowed by Hume, that these arguments are incapable of refutation—"I jealous of Voltaire's favour. " ' Laissez faire,' lui dit le roi, ' on presse l'orange et on la jette quand on a avalé le jus.' La Metrie ne manqua pas de me rendre ce bel apophthègme, digne de Denis de Syracuse."—*Mémoires de Voltaire écrits par lui-même.*

confess," he says, " that if any man think that this reasoning much requires an answer, it will be a little difficult to find any, which will to him appear satisfactory and convincing. If his heart rebel not against such pernicious maxims; if he feel no reluctance to the thoughts of such villany or baseness, he has lost a considerable motive to virtue, and we may expect, that his practice will be answerable to his speculation. But in all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counterbalanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage*."—It is then acknowledged, that according to the theory, by which self-interest is laid as the foundation of our reciprocal duties and obligations, no restraint would be imposed on the excesses of that large portion of society, whose dispositions are either ori-

* *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*, sec. ix.

ginally base, or corrupted by circumstances ; and who are conscious of no particular antipathy to lucrative falsehood, or profitable imposition.—But “ the heart is to rebel.”—Why should the heart rebel against offence, if this maxim were universally admitted ?—The affections are exalted or depraved according to the instructions by which the mind is formed and moulded. If conscience be an inspiration of nature, its direction is received from education ; and if it be informed that self-interest is the foundation and rule of virtue—as long as that interest is promoted—why should any anxiety of contrition resent the perpetration of a crime, which is only a more extensive and liberal application of the authorized principle of conduct ?—It is impossible that any dignity of character, or elevation of sentiment, should resist the taint of so deteriorating an influence. Generosity,

gratitude, constancy, temperance, fidelity would be absorbed by a spirit of overweening selfishness. An universal prevalence would be given to those mean and easy and subservient ethics, which, if they secretly predominate in christian countries with the disingenuous and the sordid, are scrupulously concealed from observation, and are never openly adopted as the practical maxims of existence, by any but the very outcasts of society, the parasite, the swindler, the gamester, and the pick-pocket.—Virtue, dispossessed of every unearthly claim on our adoration, degraded from its native heaven, deprived of every sacred attribute, and coldly recommended to our approval like “some ingenious machine, a piece of furniture, or vestment*,” for “its use and its convenience,” would only be esteemed as long as it promised us some personal advan-

* HUME'S *Principles of Morals*, Sec. 2.

tage, and would be exchanged for profitable crime, when vice had clothed itself in the attractive character of expediency.

OF OPINION.

But it is, perhaps, imagined, that the deficiencies and imperfections of the more palpable substitutes for Christianity, may be remedied by the powerful influence of opinion ; that the uncertain and precarious inspection of mankind, may replace the inevitable vigilance of the Almighty ; that the desire of conciliating the approbation, and the timidity of encountering the censures, of the public, may effectually supersede the sanctions of religion, and supply the absence of those salutary hopes and fears, which, to the disciple of the Redeemer, connect his actions with an everlasting retribution. A very few observations will be sufficient to shew that these speculations are unfounded, and evince the futility of opinion, undirected

and unsupported by religious faith, as an instrument for the cultivation of virtue and the discouragement of crime.

Public opinion itself requires to be educated and formed: and, if the volume of revelation be annihilated, to what pure and uniform and uncontaminated sources shall it apply for the necessary instruction. If we turn to the pages of the philosophers, Montaigne assures us, that they are all polluted with obscenities *; and the human heart and mind are not of a temperament and disposition to separate between the good and evil, and to select the valuable and reject the base.

Public opinion has no certainty or consistency in its determinations. It applauds

* “ En toutes les chambrées de la philosophie ancienne, ceci se trouvera, qu’un même ouvrier y publie des règles de tempérance et publie ensemble des écrits d’amour, et de débauche.”—*Essais*, liv. iii. chap. 9. The same accusation may be imputed to the whole school of modern philosophers, from Voltaire to the authors of *The Liberal*.

to-day the very conduct that it may vilify to-morrow. It exists in a state of ceaseless mutability. It changes and fluctuates with every variation of manners and of customs. It is a part of “the fashion of this world,” which, says the Apostle, “passeth away * ;” and religion is absolutely requisite to confer upon it a fixedness and a stability.—“Il est nécessaire à la société qu’il y ait quelque chose de fixe, et c’est la religion qui est quelque chose de fixe †.”

Public opinion will often desecrate a virtue and consecrate a vice. The multitude is the organ by which its voice is rendered audible; and its decisions are corrupted by their habits and inclinations. Example intimidates and overawes its censures; and drunkenness, in times of

* 1 Cor. viii. 31.

† MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Loix*. liv. 26, ch. 2.

runder manners, or licentious love, in times of greater civility and refinement, has rather met with encouragement than rebuke, from the determinations of opinion.

Public opinion, unless it be secured by the permanent convictions of the Gospel, like all other bodies in a rapid state of motion, is susceptible of being easily diverted from its lawful course. When the people have become satiated with a repetition of the truth, the ingenious sophistry will be received with eagerness, and adopted on the recommendation of its novelty. When the passions are excited, any precepts that coincide with their desires will be admitted without hesitation or dispute*. And when the applauses

* Il est inouï combien il est facile de faire prendre une bêtise pour étendard au peuple le plus spirituel de la terre. C'est encore un de ces contrastes qui seraient tout-à-fait inexplicables, si la malheureuse France n'avait pas été dépouillée de religion et de morale par un enchaînement funeste de mauvais principes et d'événemens malheureux. Sans

of the world are elevated to the view as the most desirable objects of emulation ; if distinction can no longer be secured by the enforcement of righteousness, it will be sought by the extension of iniquity. Opinion will be destroyed in the eager competition for applause ; and all the fair distinctions of truth and falsehood,—of good and evil,—of virtue and of vice, will be levelled in the tumultuous and unprincipled pursuit of notoriety.

To propose the gaze and acclamations of the multitude as the aim and purpose of our endeavours, and supersede the inducements of religious hope and fear, by the ambition of an earthly fame, and the apprehensions of an earthly censure, is to overthrow that true humility which is the basis of the Christian system, and the

religion, aucun homme n'est capable de sacrifice, et sans morale, personne ne parlant vrai, l'opinion publique est sans cesse égarée.—MAD. DE STAEL, *Dix Années d'Exil*, p. 100.

deep and firm foundation of all real virtue; it is to introduce an universal exhibition of showy qualities, and glittering accomplishments; to withdraw a man from the quiet and retiring duties of his home, and “set him on a stage; and to make him an artificial creature, with painted, theatric sentiments, fit only to be seen by the glare of candle-light, and formed to be contemplated at a due distance *.” If public opinion is deified; vanity will be the prevailing disposition of its votaries, which, “if it be of little moment in a small degree, and conversant in little things, when full grown, assumes the character of the worst of vices, and is the occasional mimic of them all; it makes the whole man false; it leaves nothing sincere and trust-worthy about him, but his best qualities are poisoned and

* Letter to a Member of the National Assembly. 8vo edition of BURKE'S *Works*, vol. vi. p. 34.

perverted by it, and operate exactly as his worst*.”

From the consideration, then, of the defects which are inseparable from those mere human obligations to duty and restraints on crime, which are vaunted by the distinguished teachers of ungodliness, as adequate to maintain the order and the tranquillity of the universe, and replace the venerable sanctions of religion, we may perceive that their unsupported adoption would rather lead to injurious, than to beneficial, issues ; that, instead of contributing their forces to the preservation of society, they would become distorted by the corruption of the passions, and conspire as enemies, where they were solicited as allies ; that they themselves have need of instruction, assistance, and restraint from those sacred intimations

* Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Assembly, p. 31.

of the Gospel, which they have falsely been considered capable of superseding ; and that the want of Christian opinions would, indeed, be irremediable by any substitutes, which could be devised by the ingenuity, or established by the authority, of man.

We have seen that the lessons of revelation, its morals and its sanctions, are essential to the happiness of man. We have shewn that the momentous truths which it communicates could not have been established by the unassisted faculties of the reason. We have shewn that the invention of mankind could suggest no substitute that could supply the void occasioned by the extirpation of the Gospel.

From this conclusion there results this most memorable and important reflection :

The man who would boldly and impiously extend the principles of infidelity, or countenance the desecration of the Gospel, advances in avowed hostility to the peace and order of human existence. He is the malignant foe of the monarch and the subject, of the rich and the poor, of our social confidence, of our domestic purity, and of the inward tranquillity of the heart. He is a conspirator against the happiness of his race. He rends the golden chain asunder, by which earth is linked with heaven. He severs the alliances by which man is united with his God. He endeavours to dispossess his fellow-creatures of those holier and sublimer qualities, which exalt their nature above the beasts that perish, and seeks to re-deliver them to the subjection of their bewildering appetites, and their vagrant and selfish inclinations. He attempts to urge his

kind into the track of a moral and intellectual debasement, where all civility and arts, justice and probity, constancy and tenderness, may perish in a common ruin, with those sacred aspirations of hope and sentiment, which have been awakened in the human soul by the commanding summons of the Redeemer.—Cities and villages have gradually collected about the spot in which the altar had been raised ; they will be again deserted when the altar is destroyed.—That narrative of ancient song is not all a fable, which relates that the safety of the long-beleaguered city was inseparably attached to the preservation of the statue of its presiding god. There was here a precept of deep, of solemn, of invariable truth, concealed within a veil of superstitious fiction. In every nation, and to every people, religion is the energy of war, and the

security of peace*. FAITH is the true Palladium; and it can neither suffer increase or diminution in the affections of the people, but the happiness and prosperity of the people will be influenced with a sympathetic elevation or depression. Long and nobly did the bulwarks of Sion resist the forces of imperial hostility; and all the arts of war without, and disease and famine, the gaunt allies of the enemy, within, were ineffectual against the fortresses of the holy and devoted city, while the iniquities of Israel

* “ The safety of all estates dependeth upon religion;—Religion, unfeignedly loved, perfecteth men’s abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth; men’s desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and whatsoever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain sparks of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error, because no religion can wholly and only consist of untruths; we have reason to think, that all true virtues are to honour true religion as their parent, and all well-ordered commonwealths to love her as their chiefest stay.” — HOOKER’s *Works*, Oxford Edition, vol. ii. p. 12.

were unaccomplished, and while the guardian angels yet lingered in the temple. But, at length, the solemn stillness of the sanctuary was disturbed by the rushing of departing sounds, and the words of renouncing voices ; and the cry that bore witness to the abandonment of the presiding spirits, announced the triumph of the enemies of Jerusalem.—Eradicate from the public mind the sentiment and convictions of Christianity ;—permit that the lessons of unbelief should be universally disseminated and received ;—and better were it for us, that our protecting ocean should swell above its limits, and sweep away the inhabitants of our land in a sudden and annihilating destruction ; for that deluge would be a merciful deliverance ; it would save us from years of wasting tumult and depopulating sin ; it would accelerate an inc-

vitale fate, where delay would offer no enjoyment of existence, but only serve to agonize the sufferers with the increase and the protraction of wretchedness. Society subsists by the means and influence of religion. Without its salutary restraints on the wildness of the desires, the fair and beautiful and noble fabric of society—like a mountain wasted by subterraneous fires—would be inwardly consumed by the fervours of the passions. It would stand erect a little while, in the thin and hollow shell of its proportions ; but would crumble into dust at the first collision of opposing interests, and leave the unpeopled world a dreary spectacle to the angels of good and evil—a thing of silence, and solitude, and desolation.

THE END.

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